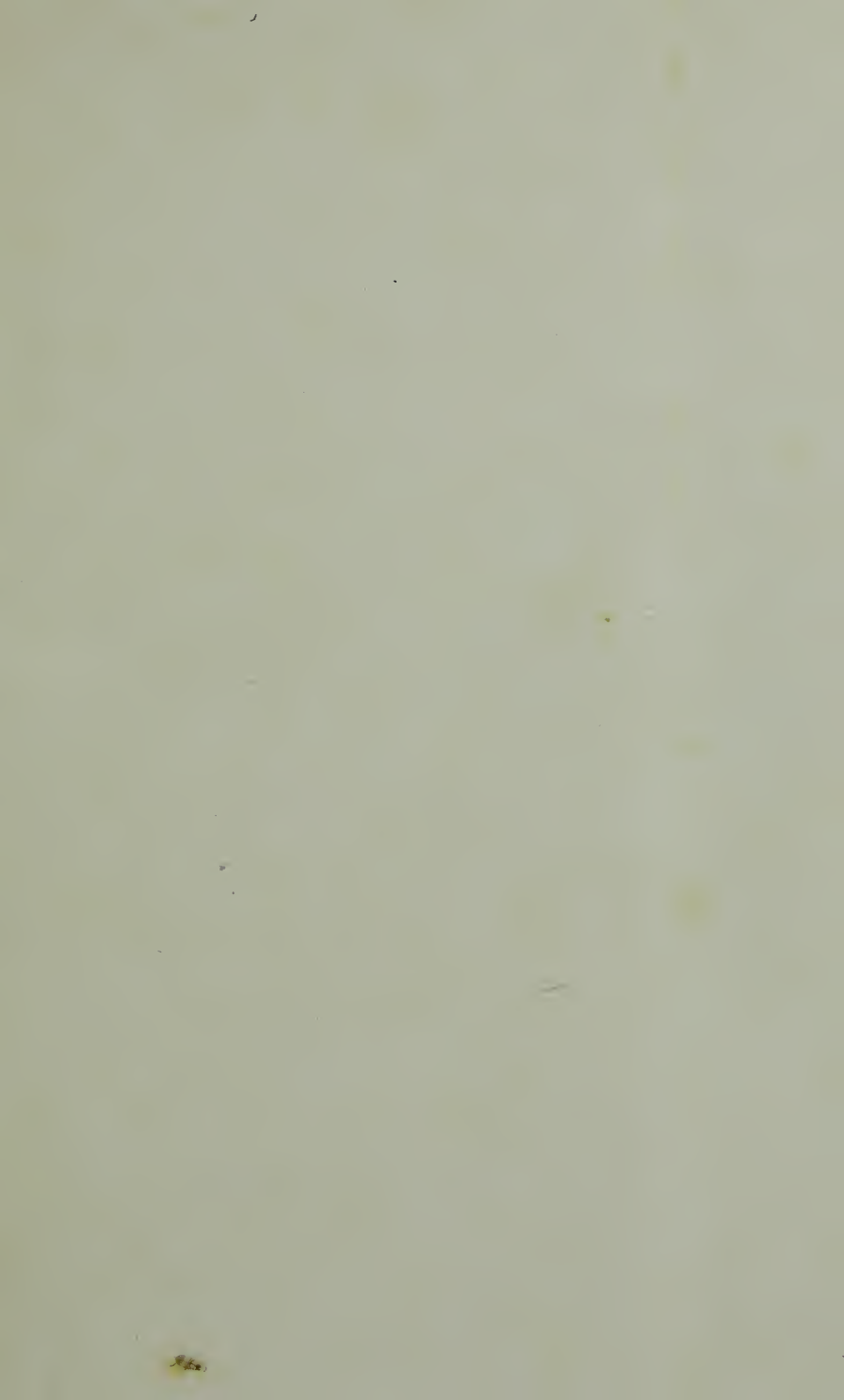




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*No. 229*



BOOKBINDERS  
AND THEIR CRAFT





# BOOKBINDERS AND THEIR CRAFT

BY S. T. PRIDEAUX

AUTHOR OF "AN HISTORICAL SKETCH OF BOOKBINDING"



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## PREFACE



OF the papers collected in this volume, those on "Roger Payne" and "English and Scottish Bindings of the Last Century" were written for the "Magazine of Art," and are here reprinted by the courtesy of Messrs. Cassell. The notice of M. Thoinan's important book was contributed to "Bibliographica," and is included by the kind permission of Messrs. Kegan Paul and Co. All the rest appeared either in "Scribner's Magazine" or "The Bookbuyer," except the second paper on "Early Italian Bindings," which is now added

in order to complete the outline of the subject. They are practically issued as they were first written, with the drawbacks and limitations of the restricted magazine article: for to have attempted much alteration would have deprived them of their original character. There are fresh illustrations to the paper on "Design in Bookbinding," some additional plates of early Italian and stamped bindings, and others in "Notes on Pattern-Making" showing modern applications of Oriental motives.

I am indebted to Miss M. A. Bell for her help with the designs in this paper, which has enabled me to give greater variety to the series of plates in illustration of the points under discussion.

I must express my very grateful acknowledgment to Mr. W. Y. Fletcher for his aid so willingly rendered in the revision of the proofs.

## PREFACE

It only remains for me to thank Messrs. Scribner for their initiative in the matter of this reprint, and to express a hope that the increasing interest in binding shown in America will justify its issue.

S. T. P.



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SOME ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH BINDINGS  
OF THE LAST CENTURY





# I

## SOME ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH BINDINGS OF THE LAST CENTURY



IT seems worth while, with the increased interest in bindings, to call attention to two types that have not hitherto met with the recognition they deserve : these are the Scottish bindings of—roughly speaking—the early eighteenth century, and the English inlaid work of about the same date, but earlier. Although coupled together for the purpose of treatment in this article, they bear no resemblance to each other, and are, in fact, two perfectly distinct styles.

Unfortunately the obscurity that prevails, with very few exceptions, with regard to

the whole history of binding as a craft, exists also at this period. All one can do under the circumstance is to direct the attention of the public interested in the subject to certain types of design thrown into shadow hitherto by the more prominent ones, in the hope that by study of individual specimens something of the genius and development of ornament, as applied to binding, may be discovered, and perhaps, by the way, something also of the binder and of the conditions under which he worked. This, it is hoped, may prove sufficient excuse for this paper, which certainly lacks the historic interest attached to bindings done for French princes and great collectors.

The readers of such literature of binding as exists must surely be somewhat wearied by the limitation of treatment to Grolier and Maioli, Le Gascon, the Eves, and Derôme, with an occasional mention of Mearne and Roger Payne as the only English binders worthy of consideration. "Les Relieurs Français, 1560-1800," by Ernest Thoinan

contains nearly all that is likely to be known of binding, as the art was pursued and cultiv-



BIBLE WITH INLAID BINDING

ated in France. It certainly contains the result of the most recent and elaborate researches among the archives of the Bibliothèque Nationale, and though we may not always

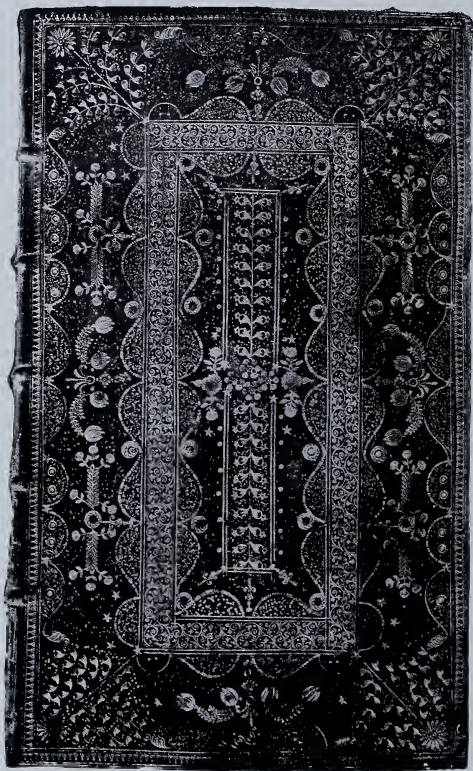
agree with the conclusions of the author on certain long disputed points, the interest of his material is not affected by his deductions. For information as to the early history of the Guild of Binders and Gilders in Paris, its connection with the University, and its statutes, the account given by M. Thoinan is the only one. It is followed by a short history of the different ornamental styles through which the art passed, and concludes with a biographical notice of all the French binders. Far more information is therein contained than has ever been put together before, including much entirely unknown hitherto to the English reader. With the appearance of this work we may hope that those who want to discuss binding will give up the repetition of platitudes about the great French craftsmen, and devote themselves more to seeing what can be discovered in our own country. I am ready to admit that the art never attained over here anything like the perfection it did abroad ; that not only the same technical mastery has never been forthcom-

ing, but that also the inventiveness to produce a national style has not as yet arisen. For long periods we were content to assimilate the designs of our neighbours as they arose one after the other ; hardly, indeed, to assimilate, rather to reproduce them for our own needs, and that for the most part slavishly, and with no new elements.

But every now and again we come across some volume that shows on the part of the workman a distinct effort to get rid of imitation and attempt a new style. A discovery of this sort should be followed up by careful observation in any library there may be at hand of books of the same date or place of publication ; and in this way we may, perhaps, one day attain to something like a connected account of the art in our own country.

The two types that claim attention in this paper have hardly been realized as yet, and there is but little information to be given about them. We may, perhaps, dismiss the English one first as offering even

less material for information than the Scottish, and presenting less variety in the indi-



BIBLE WITH INLAID BINDING

vidual specimens. It is also earlier in date. All we really know about this English inlaid work, of which two examples are here re-



## ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH BINDINGS

produced, is that it is to be found on Bibles, Prayer Books, and the like, at the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning



A SCOTTISH BINDING IN BLUE MOROCCO

of the last century. The colour of the cover is a dark-blue and the inlays are of red and citron. Many of these books have also silver clasps, and corners delicately engraved with some slight ornament of the period,

and some have decorated edges—mostly a flower painted underneath the gold. The tools used for the decoration are many of them in outline, bordering an inlay of the same shape, generally a conventional flower. The parts inlaid, besides these small flowers, are, generally speaking, the corners and centre of a panel, upon which are worked very freely, and without regard to neatness of joining, certain well recognized ornaments that formed the stock-in-trade of the ordinary binder of the time. The tooling is rough, and the beauty of the book depends more on the general effect of colour and the massing of design than on the execution of the pattern itself.

Nevertheless, the sprays that fill up the spaces between the inlays are often extremely graceful, and the details composing them are very delicate, the tools being well designed and finely cut.

Altogether, these bindings have a great attractiveness, perhaps the greater for their want of elaborate finish. They are happily



inspired, and most distinctly national, which is a point well worthy of emphasis. The larger of the two illustrations is that of a Bible in the possession of Mr. C. E. H. Chadwyck Healy, printed at Cambridge in 1673. It is a large quarto, in excellent preservation, having the painted edges before mentioned, and silver clasps and corners.

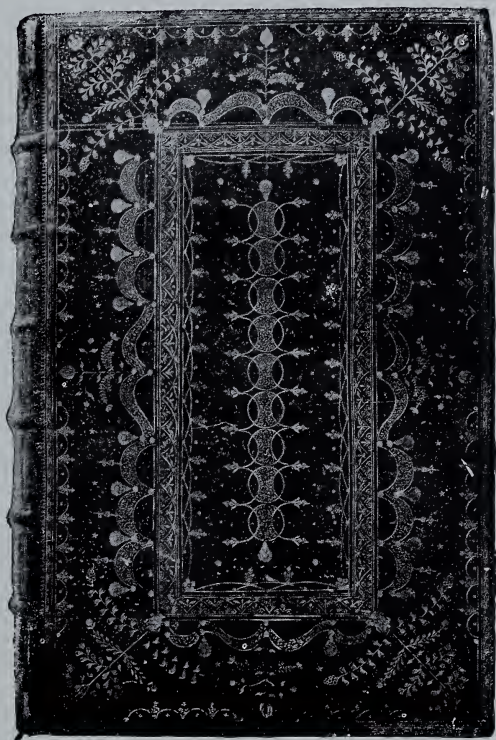
The other is also a Bible, printed at London in 1673, and bought by Mr. Quaritch from the library of the late Mr. Lawrence. Of course all the beauty of colour is lost in the illustrations, and for that reason it is not worth while to give more than two reproductions. The number of these books to be met with is not very large, but many a family that dates back a couple of hundred years probably has some one among its treasures, kept with the fans and laces, the charms, and chatelaines, and knickknacks of its feminine ancestors. One such I lately came across almost unknown to its possessor, in which were entered, after the domestic custom of that day, the names and

dates of all the family for years in quaint old phraseology that added greatly to the interest of what was one of the best specimens of this kind of binding. It was a type that was probably in the hands of only a few binders, and very likely almost reserved for the Bibles and Prayer Books that formed gift books.

It is not until the last part of the seventeenth century that we find any important bindings obviously of Scottish workmanship. The annals of Scottish printing are searched in vain for any record of binders. Printing progressed but slowly in the country. The first press was established in 1507 by patent of King James IV, granted to two citizens of the town of Edinburgh named Walter Chepman and Andrew Myllar. There is little doubt that it was introduced from France, Myllar having at one time been a bookseller importing books from abroad, and having apparently some practical knowledge of printing obtained on the Continent.

## ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH BINDINGS

The license begins in the following quaint way: "Wit ye that foisamekill as



A SCOTTISH BINDING IN RED MOROCCO

our lovittis servitous Walter Chepman  
and Andrew Myllar burgesses of our burgh  
of Edinburgh, has at our instance and re-

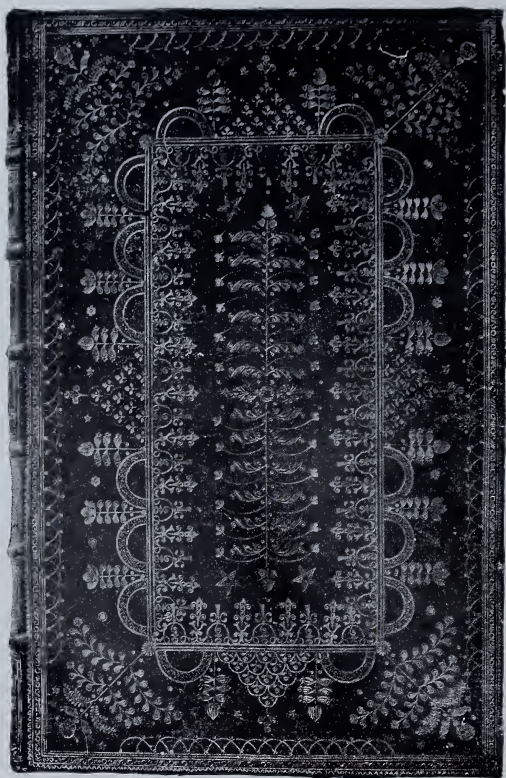
quest, for our plesour, the honour and proffit of our Realme and Liegis, takin on thame to furnis and bring hame ane prent, with all stuff belangand tharto and expert men to use the sayme for imprenting within our Realme of the bukis of our Lawis, actis of Parliament croniclis, mess bukis," etc., etc. These adventurous citizens are further guaranteed from loss by a monopoly of printing certain books, and last, but by no means least, among such books the liturgical works of William, Bishop of Aberdeen. Indeed, it is thought by some that the object and origin of the introduction of printing to Scotland was not so much to procure printed books as to enable this bishop, who had great influence over the king, to exclude the books of Salisbury use, and impose his own breviary, called the Aberdeen breviary, upon the people.

There is no doubt that the "prent and expert men" were imported from France, as this has been decided from the similarity of the type and wood blocks used by Myllar

with those in French books of the period. The division of the partnership has been made obvious from the documents of the time. Chepman was a general merchant who undertook miscellaneous commercial transactions, and was in favour both with James IV and James V. The idea of the new venture was probably suggested by him as well as financed by his money, and Myllar, as more or less of an expert versed in the craft, undertook the practical leadership of the concern.

I have said that the French origin of the Scottish development has been proved from the likeness between the woodcuts used there and those in contemporary use on the Continent. Chepman, like most of the early printers, had a device, and this was in fact a modification of the one known to lovers of early-printed books as that of Pigouchet. Myllar's was a capital example of the punning or parlant stamp. A miller carries a sack of corn on his back up a ladder to the windmill; the stem of the mill supports a

shield with the monogram, while the name is in bold Gothic letters along the bottom



A SCOTTISH BINDING IN BLUE MOROCCO

of the device. Two small shields at the top corners are charged with three fleurs-de-lys. Many examples of these punning



stamps may be found on early French bindings, when books were bound in brown leather and impressed by a block without gold. But the interesting point about this particular device of Myllar's is that, though there is no printed book extant by him which has it impressed on the binding, there are two book-covers in the Douce collection of the Bodleian Library at Oxford, which have the same device with the name of Jehan Moulin. There are several examples of Moulin binding in existence, and his stamp is one of the finest and most decorative of the kind.

It was natural that certain of these devices, or parts of them, should appear in stamps on the leather covers in which books from the early presses were mostly issued. The printing, binding and bookselling departments were not unusually combined in one, so that it frequently happened that the trade-mark was impressed as a panel stamp as above described. The French panel stamps far excelled all others in beauty as well as fre-

quency, and a collection of them would go a long way to show the especial recognition of the French of the appropriate use of ornament to book-covers, and its adaptation to the limited space which they had to decorate.

It is, however, in vain that we look for any such distinctive marks of the binder in Scotland, even at the early period when signed bindings were not infrequent abroad. The whole period is destitute of any record. Some indication may be found occasionally from very unexpected sources, and it is to be hoped that now attention has been directed to the matter, such sources as the one I am about to mention may prove more fruitful of results in the future. There is a tombstone in Elgin Cathedral of William Lyel, "*subdicanus ecclesie moraviensis*," who died in 1504. The stone is long and narrow, having a cross in the centre, a cup on one side of the stem of the cross, and a book in the corresponding space to the right. The inscription runs in a border all round,



and is to this effect : “Hic jacet venerabilis vir magister vilelmus lyel quondā subdecanus



SCOTCH BINDING IN BLUE MOROCCO

ecclesie moravien. q. obiit—die mēs—Anno diii Mcccc. iiiv.” A rubbing of the book shows that it probably represents a fine binding of the time, and the design con-

sists of a diaper of diamond-shaped lozenges set between a heavy three-lined border, and on the fore-edge is a clasp. The rubbing measures  $10\frac{1}{2}$  inches by 6 inches.

The early Italian pictures, with their Madonnas and Apostles, who frequently hold in their hands some rare and costly missal, give us not infrequently a very clear idea of the contemporary bindings, jeweled and otherwise enriched, which were placed at the service of the Church and mostly executed within conventual walls. In the same way it is not impossible that from time to time the student of Scottish archæology may come upon some instances of the applied arts which will prove important for the early history of Scottish binding.

As for the written records, if not quite so scanty, they are not any more instructive. The following specimens of what we get in this way are indicative of all the documentary evidence that is to be had up to this date. In 1539 the King's treasurer pays David Chepman, son of Walter, the printer,

ten shillings Scots, “for binding and laying about with gold the queen’s matin buke.” In the accounts of Aberdeen University we find: “Item to James Miller, bookbinder, for binding for Mr. Jon Paterson Mr. John Meingyes Sermons aforesaid, 44lb. 2s.’” And again—“Item to Peter Thomson for cutting 7m, being 3 quares, 6s.”

It was not till the seventeenth century that printing really spread to the provinces of Scotland. Aberdeen did not receive a press till 1622, when Edward Raban, an Englishman by birth, came north to execute his craft, and after staying a short time in Edinburgh, was made printer to the University of St. Andrews. He had a great friendship with Melvill, the bookseller of Aberdeen, for whom he printed, and in 1643 Raban is mentioned as having a book-selling as well as a printing business. Now Melvill died in that same year, and it is probable that the bookselling shop was Melvill’s business that Raban took over on his death. One would like to discover some

bindings that emanated from this well-authenticated bookshop. It is possible that the libraries of Scotland—the University Library at Glasgow that contains the Hunterian collection; the Edinburgh University Library, to which the entire collection of Drummond of Hawthornden was bequeathed; the Advocate's Library, and the Signet Library in the same town, may contain much that is valuable in this and other directions. The more remote collections, too, not yet explored, from this point of view, may some day yield unexpected treasures. But such researches as have come within my power have not resulted in the identification of any ornate Scotch binding earlier than the last quarter of the seventeenth century.

Since the dispersal of the private libraries of Dr. Laing, Mr. Whiteford Mackenzie, Mr. James Maidment, and the late Sir W. Fettes Douglas, who is said to have had a fine collection of old Scotch bindings, it is not likely that any considerable number are to be found in a single owner's possession.

## ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH BINDINGS



A SCOTTISH BINDING IN RED MOROCCO

There were several interesting examples exhibited at the Burlington Fine Arts Club, three of which are figured in their illustrated catalogue.

I think I can trace two fairly distinct types of Scotch binding during the eighteenth century. The examples here given are all from Edinburgh printed books, and

with one exception are all in the library of the British Museum; and both types appear to be fairly contemporaneous, though I shall begin with the one that seems to be the earlier of the two, as it is found on the one book having a date of the previous century. This is the "Parfait Mareschal or Compleat Farrier," printed at Edinburgh in 1696. It is a fine specimen of a small folio measuring 12 inches by  $7\frac{3}{4}$  inches, bound in dark blue morocco, and has a red doublure. It will be seen from the illustration that the design is put together most ingeniously. The weak part is the framework of the centre panel, which is made by means of a wide ornamental roll worked roughly enough at the angles. The spaces marked out by gouges which border the panel inside and out, and likewise the sides of the covers are very effectively filled in with dots, and the branch work in the centre and at the corners is decidedly graceful. The design is, on the whole, well conceived with the exception above mentioned, and the general



effect is well-balanced and satisfying to the eye.

The second example is also a small folio in red morocco, a "History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland from the Restoration to the Revolution," printed at Edinburgh in 1722. The third is a "History of the Church under the Old Testament," Edinburgh, 1730, a folio in blue morocco. The fourth is a Psalter belonging to Mr. John Wordie of Glasgow, an octavo in blue morocco, which was the colour most used at that period.

These four specimens are all different, but have at the same time a marked similarity that proves conclusively, I think, that there was a distinct type of Scottish binding during this period.

The other type is one that has always in the centre a circular ornament with radiating lines, and at the angles conventional branch work, consisting mostly, of palm sprays. The examples of Scotch binding exhibited at the Burlington Fine Arts Club were

of this character, the best specimen being the "Disputatio Juridica," Edinburgh, 1730, 4to, a presentation copy to Lord Lauderdale, to whom the "Disputatio" is dedicated. This book was lent by Mr. R. T. Hamilton Bruce, and is figured in the catalogue.

The specimen here given is not a very interesting one, but presents clearly enough the type in all its features. The book is entitled "Éloge de la ville d'Edinbourg divisé en quatre chants par le sieur de Forbes," à Edinbourg, 1752, 12mo. It is bound in red morocco, and, like all the others represented, has that German embossed gilt paper for "end papers" which came over here in the early part of the eighteenth century.



CHARACTERISTICS AND PECULIARITIES  
OF  
ROGER PAYNE, BINDER



## II

### CHARACTERISTICS AND PECULIARITIES OF ROGER PAYNE, BINDER



AT the outset of this account of Roger Payne and his bindings, I want to state my object in drawing attention to him at this moment, and to emphasize the special interest that I consider his work to have. Most people who care sufficiently for bookbinding to know anything of Roger Payne are probably a little tired by this time of the story of his eccentric individuality, his verses in praise of drink, and the quaint elaborateness of his bills, all of which, ever since the days of Dibdin, have been mentioned as the main points of interest connected with his history. But to my

mind the chief thing that dissociates him from other members of his craft—with the exception of his style of ornamentation, which was very original—is that he did the whole of his work himself, and I know of no other binder of whom this can be said.

People who are even but slightly acquainted with the work of a binder's shop know that it is divided into three main departments—that books are sewn and headbanded by women, put into boards, cut and covered by the “forwarder,” and ornamented by the “finisher.” The result is that personality in the work is lost. There may be a certain similarity of appearance in the books turned out by a special binder, because one or more styles will generally prevail in any given shop, but of individuality in the get-up of the several books there is none. Nor can this possibly be made a matter of reproach in the ordinary run of work; prices would not admit of its being done on any other principle than that of subdivision of labour. But the fact remains that a book carried out



“LE FACECIEUX”

from beginning to end by a craftsman intelligently interested in his trade, wholly responsible for the success of his work, and with sufficient artistic feeling to make the commercial point of view a secondary one,

will have a personal character about it that one which has passed through many hands will never acquire.

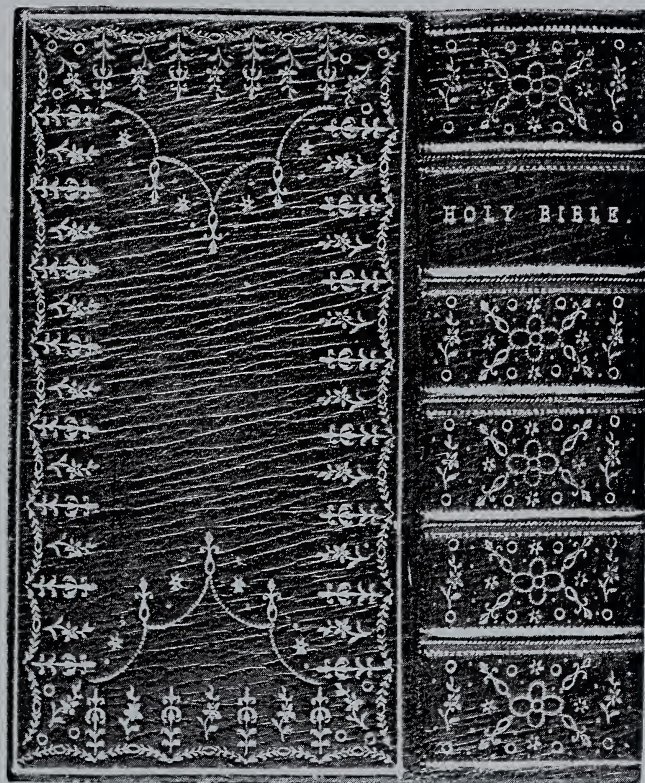
It is to the character in Roger Payne's work that I want to direct the attention of lovers of binding. Not that this can possibly be conveyed by illustrations—those will give the ornamental detail, but little else. I doubt, however, if anyone who takes half a dozen of Roger Payne's bindings and puts them side by side with a similar number of books bound by the best French and English binders, will be long in feeling that, though they may be lacking in technical finish, they have yet an individuality all their own.

Before proceeding to a detailed appreciation of his work, a brief sketch of Payne's life may be given. He was born in Windsor Forest in 1739, and was first employed by Pote, the well-known Eton bookseller. He then went to London, and served a short time with Thomas Osborne, an antiquarian bookseller in Gray's Inn. Dibdin says Tom Osborne was the most celebrated bookseller



## CHARACTERISTICS OF ROGER PAYNE

of his day, and carried on a successful trade from the year 1738 to 1768. He appears at all



IN THE COLLECTION OF ALFRED HUTH, ESQ.

events to have purchased the libraries of the most eminent collectors of the time, for he gave £13,000 for the Harleian collection,

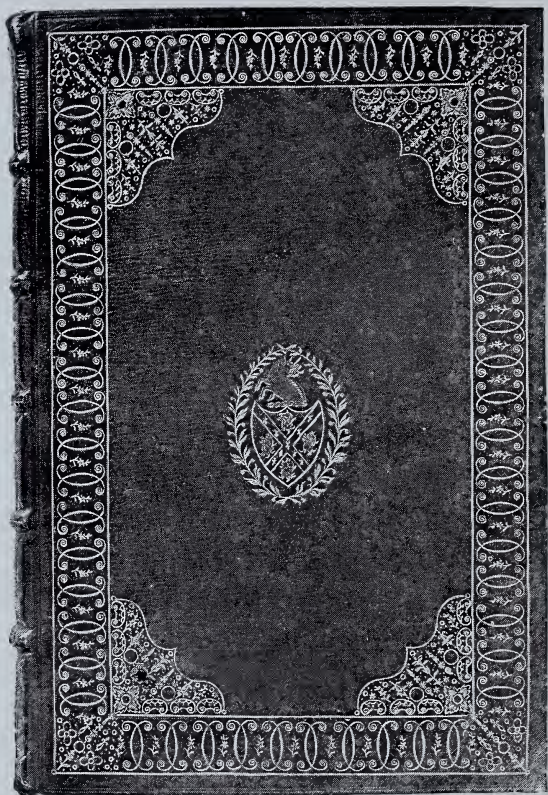
and employed Dr. Johnson to write the Preface to an account of it published in four volumes and entitled "*Catalogus Bibliothecæ Harleianæ*," etc. Osborne was so rough and overbearing in his manners that Boswell declares Johnson once knocked him down with a folio and put his foot upon his neck. He was evidently not popular, being a great contrast in this respect to his contemporary, "honest Tom Payne," of whom T. G. Mathias speaks so appreciatively in the "*Pursuits of Literature*." Anyway he had not the wit to know Roger Payne for a genius, or if he had the wit he had not the temper to keep him in his employment. They could not agree, and Roger then made the acquaintance of his namesake above-mentioned—Thomas Payne, the popular leading bookseller of the time, whose shop in the shape of an I at the Mews Gate was a sort of literary coffee-house between 1750 and 1790. His brother Oliver, with whom he started in business, is said to have originated the idea and practice of printing catalogues. Thomas was much



respected by all the authors and book-collectors of his time, and is thus described in Nichols's "Literary Anecdotes": "Warm in his friendships as in his politicks, a convivial, cheerful companion, and unalterable in the cut and colour of his coat, he uniformly pursued one great object, fair dealing, and will survive in the list of booksellers the most eminent for being adventurous and scientific, by the name of honest Tom Payne." His lasting friendship with Roger is not the least of the tributes to his kindness and generosity.

He set him up in business near Leicester Square somewhere between 1766 and 1770. The portrait which Thomas Payne had made of Roger for himself—it is said after his death—shows him in this garret, where he lived and worked. "His appearance," said Dibdin, "bespoke either squalid wretchedness or a foolish and fierce indifference to the received opinions of mankind. His hair was unkempt, his attire wretched; and the interior of his workshop—where, like the Turk, he would 'bear no brother near

his throne'—harmonized but too justly with the general character of its owner. With



IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM. CRACHERODE BEQUEST

the greatest possible display of humility he quite united the spirit of quixotic indepen-

dence. Such a compound—such a motley union—was probably never before concentrated in one and the same individual.”

Richard Weir, whose wife attained a great reputation in the mending and restoration of books, was his partner toward the end of his life. Mr. and Mrs. Weir had succeeded Derôme in 1774 in binding and repairing the library of Count Macarthy at Toulouse, and on their return to England joined Paine, but both men being intemperate, the business rapidly deteriorated, until they were finally taken into the employment of John Mackinlay, the binder.

The most important event in Payne's life was undoubtedly his introduction to Lord Spencer. How this came about we do not know exactly, but it was most probably through his friend and namesake the bookseller. Dibdin relates that the Countess Spencer's lady's maid remarked on seeing Payne, whose first visit to the Earl was made apparently while they were dressing for court: “Oh Dieu! mais, comment

donc, est-ce que c'est ainsi qu' on se presente dans ce pays-ci dans un cabinet de toilette?" This was the beginning of much work for the Althorp Library; and other well-known patrons were Dr. Moseley, who is supposed to have had some of his books bound in return for medical advice, and Colonel Stanley, for whom Payne did some excellent specimens.

The leather that he worked in was red or blue straight-grain morocco or a smooth olive morocco, which he liked best, and which he called "Venetian" in his bills, probably from its similarity to the color used by Aldus. Unfortunately for durability, a good deal of his work was also done in Russia leather. His choice of lining papers was a great blot on the appearance of his books; they were never marbled, but plain coloured, chiefly purple or buff, which harmonized ill with his leathers, and being coarse of texture, they often became unpleasantly spotted.

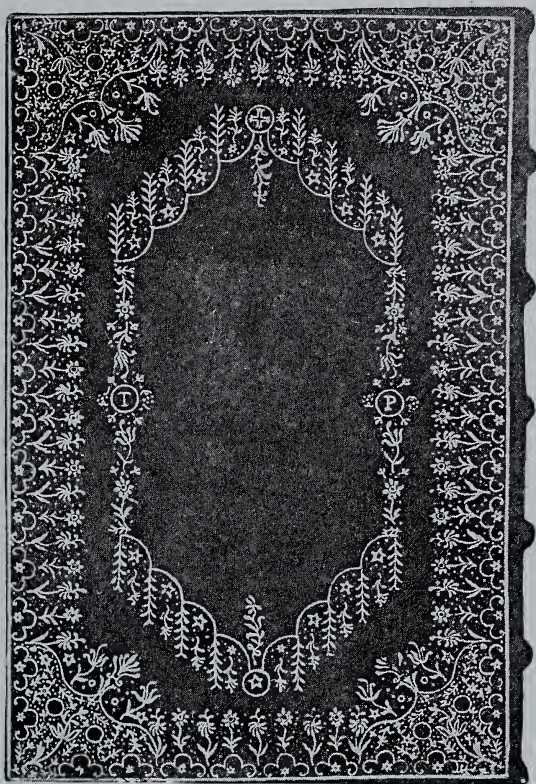
His books were well stitched and head-

banded, and the criticism frequently passed that he used too thin boards is not borne out by an inspection of those in the British Museum. He had a habit of lining the backs with Russia leather, which, in the case of the smaller size books, was very unfortunate, for it prevented them from opening freely. His leather joints were very clumsy, and the joints of his books as a whole were lacking in technical finish. Very few doubles are to be found, and he had no taste for the elaborateness of contemporary French work. I have mentioned the main defects of Payne's work; when we come to its decoration we are at once struck by the originality displayed in the lay-out of the design as compared with the work of previous English binders, and the great taste shown in the balance and adjustment of the detail. Payne prided himself upon what he considered the appropriateness of his ornament, but luckily its emblematic character does not strike one at first sight; that he should put a design of vine leaves on one book

because its title was "Rusticum," or that another should have a border of "antique shields and crescents" because they were in the headpiece to the preface of the book, is not a use of emblems that anyone can quarrel with. His ornamentation was never elaborate. His sides are often plain, undorned but with a single line or with corners made of a few flowers and leaves, the spaces between being filled with circles and dots. When the sides are plain, the backs are generally fully gilt, with a similar tracery of leaves and flowers studded with dots, stars and circlets. When the inside joints and border are tooled the outside is mostly left quite plain. In many cases the titles are made to decorate more than one compartment of the back, the tooling occurring only on the top and bottom spaces. This tooling is very often without gold; indeed, Payne was very fond of blind work, and many specimens of it may be seen at the British Museum. On blue and red moroccos it was not effective, but on diced Russia



## CHARACTERISTICS OF ROGER PAYNE



BIBLE, BOUND FOR TOM PAYNE

leather, and especially in combination with a certain amount of gold, the effect is extremely pleasing.

He did not have very many tools, and is said to have himself made some of them in

iron—presumably the very simple ones, stars, dots, and rings, which he had in great variety, for some of the others are of such delicacy that they indicate the practised hand of the tool cutter. It may be said in passing that it is very likely the older binders employed iron for their tools instead of the soft brass now in use, and the French word for them—“fers”—would seem to support this view.

Many of Payne's flower-foliage tools were decidedly original, though he may possibly have been indebted to Mearne and the English binders of the end of the seventeenth century and beginning of the eighteenth for some of them. They are floral without being naturalistic, sufficiently conventionalized for design, and very simply arranged in the pattern they compose. In fact, the special artistic feeling of his ornamentation consists in the skilful way in which he made dots—or “studded work,” as he called it—strengthen or balance the design so that the plan of arrangement and the combination of the in-





IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM. CRACHERODE BEQUEST

dividual tools does not catch the eye, and is in fact hidden by the richness of the studded effect. His ornamentation indeed, flowing

and graceful as it is in stem and flower, offers a striking contrast to the style that preceded it in England, known as the Harleian, which was extremely stiff and formal, and allowed of no appearance of growth or development in the arrangement of its parts.

Somehow the light and graceful character of his work seems especially suitable to the straight-grain morocco then in fashion. A "Roger Payne" style now forms one of the commonplaces of the ordinary binder's stock in trade, but carried out on the solid levant morocco in fashion has nothing like the same attractiveness. Payne wisely adhered to the style that he practically invented, and there are no examples of any attempt to compete in the reproduction of old models. There is not perhaps very much scope in his designs, and yet the variation is considerable considering the few tools he employed. These he used in fresh combinations with great inventiveness and un-failing taste, getting much richness of effect by the simple device of dots. In fact, he

thoroughly understood the art of getting effect by simplicity rather than by elaboration of ornament.

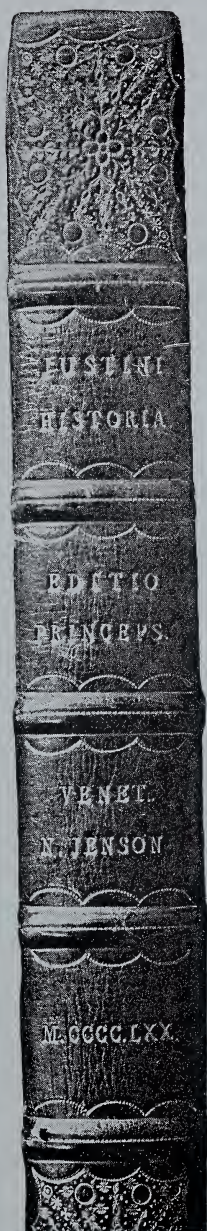
His career lasted between thirty and forty years, beginning about 1770, during which time, notwithstanding the irregularity of his habits, he was very constantly successful. He certainly met with great appreciation during his lifetime, and had it not been for his eccentric independence, he would undoubtedly have left behind him a more extensive and finer record of his skill. For Lord Spencer he worked continuously, and did many fine specimens for the Duke of Hamilton, Mr. Wodhull, Mr. Cracherode, Dr. Moseley, Colonel Stanley and other collectors.

The Roger Payne bindings in the British Museum nearly all belong to the collection bequeathed to it by Mr. Clayton Mordaunt Cracherode, who was born in 1730 and died in 1799. He held the curacy of Binsey, near Oxford, for a long time, but on the death of his father in 1773 he inherited

a large fortune, and henceforth lived as a recluse among his literary treasures. He had no curiosity about anything else, and never travelled except between London and Oxford. In 1784 he was elected a Trustee of the British Museum. Every day for many years he walked to the shop of Elmsly, a bookseller in the Strand, and thence to Tom Payne's, and never returned without purchases.

To return to Roger Payne. His chef d'œuvre is supposed to be the "Æschylus" done for Lord Spencer, and now available to the public through the generosity of Mrs. Rylands, of Manchester. Another very elaborate and fine specimen of his work is a copy of the Bible printed at Edinburgh in 1715, and now in the possession of one of the many New York collectors. It is figured in the little volume on Payne issued to his friends by Mr. W. L. Andrews, of New York, a great admirer of the binder. This Bible has an additional interest as having been bound for his friend and patron,







Thomas Payne, whose initials appear on the sides. The original bill is inserted, in which Roger says: "The outsides finished in the richest and most elegant taste, richer and more exact than any book that I have ever bound." The charge for binding was £1 18s.; for mending and cleaning, 3s. 6d.—a total of £2 1s. 6d. It is bound in blue morocco with a deep border and studded corners, and has also a panel of graceful proportions. The Grolier Club selected it for reproduction for the covers of their first publication, "The Decree of the Starre-Chamber," the letters G. C. being substituted for T. P. in the tracery on the sides.

Payne's bills, in which he describes with quaint language and in great detail, his work on the particular book, have always been considered a curiosity. At the sale of Dr. Moseley's library in 1815 several of these were found. Many of these bills have been reproduced, but as a specimen I will take one not hitherto published, except in the little book by Mr. Andrews above men-

tioned. It was for binding a copy of Lilly's "Christian Astrology," now in the Library of the Grolier Club:

"Bound in the very best manner, sewed in the very best and most honest manner on Bands, outside. The Book being very thick, it required the greater care in sewing to make it easy and not fail.

"It is absolutely a very Extra Bound Book. I hope to be forgiven in saying so and unmatched. Velum Headbands, so as not to break like paper rold up Headbands.

<p>"The greatest care and method taken to make this Book as good a Copy as my hands and experience of Work was able to do the Binding in Russia Quarto.</p>	<p>— 11s.</p>
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<p>"Washing and taking out the Writing Ink. Washed the whole Book.</p>	<p>— 6 6</p>
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<p>"Cleaning it was very dirty and I am certain took full 2 Days Work. The Frontispiece was in a very indifferent Condition all the Writing Ink is taken out of it amended and several other places mended. The greatest care hath been taken of the Margins. Gilt.</p>	<p>— 6</p>
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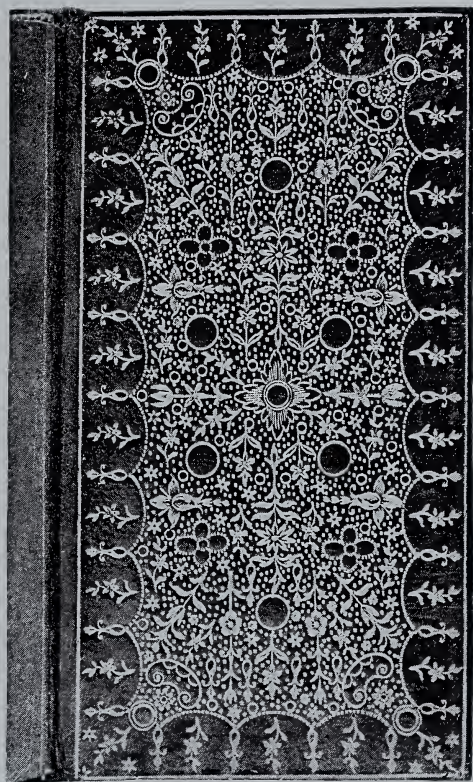
Leaves not Cutt. £1. 3. 6."

Roger Payne died in December, 1797, and the *Gentleman's Magazine* of that month



CHARACTERISTICS OF ROGER PAYNE

contains the following obituary notice of him :



IN THE COLLECTION OF ALFRED HUTH, ESQ.

“In Duke’s Court, St. Martin’s Lane, Mr. Roger Payne, the celebrated bookbinder, whose death will be a subject of lasting re-

gret to the founders of magnificent libraries. This ingenious man introduced a style of binding uniting elegance with durability, such as no person has ever been able to imitate. He may be ranked indeed among artists of the greatest merit. The ornaments he employed were chosen with a classical taste, and, in many instances, appropriated to the subject of the work or the age and time of the author ; and each book of his binding was accompanied by a written description of the ornaments in a most precise and curious style. His chef d'œuvre is his 'Aeschylus,' in the possession of Earl Spencer, the ornaments and decorations of which are most splendid and classical. The binding of the book cost the noble Earl fifteen guineas. Those who are not accustomed to see bookbinding executed in any other than the common manner can have no idea of the merits of the deceased, who lived without a rival, and, we fear, has died without a successor. His remains were decently interred at St. Martin's-in-the-

Fields at the expense of a respectable and upright bookseller, resident in that parish, to whom, in a great measure, the admirers of this ingenious man's performances may feel themselves indebted for the prolongation of his life; having for these last eight years (with that goodness of heart for which his family is distinguished) provided him with a regular pecuniary assistance, both for the support of his body and the performance of his work.

“What adds to the credit of this is that this poor man had not a proper command of himself; for formerly, when in possession of a few pounds, he would live jovially; when that was exhausted almost famishing. It may be proper to remark that though his name was spelt exactly as his patron's, he was not related to him.”

The estimate of Payne's talents contained in this account is of course an exaggerated one, though one cannot be surprised at it when the work of his predecessors and contemporaries is taken into consideration. We



IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM. CRACHERODE BEQUEST

have spoken of the marked originality of his designs, and this characteristic is an undeniable fact; there is, however, one class of bindings with which they have a certain though distant relationship—the English

and particularly the Scotch bindings of the first part of the eighteenth century.

On his successors, of course, the influence of Payne was very marked—that is to say, in England. Charles Lewis is his best imitator, and many say that his work is indistinguishable from that of Payne's except by its freedom of forwarding and general superiority of technique. This view, however, I cannot agree with; Lewis's best work was certainly altogether superior in finish, but it is not possible to mistake it for Payne's, if for no other reason on account of just that individual character on which I dwelt at the beginning, and which results from the exclusive handling throughout, in the main processes, of any work of art by the same craftsman. There is a striking similarity between Roger Payne's style of decoration and that of one Frenchman which has not apparently been noticed. Bozérian le Jeune, as he was called in distinction to his brother, opened his workshop about 1805, and in the Exhibition of Bind-



ings held at the Burlington Fine Arts Club in 1891 there was shown a small volume, "Hippocratis Coacae Praenotiones," in the decoration of which the same traditions of flower and leaf on a studded background were closely followed. It is possible that Bozérian copied Payne as English binding was popular in France about that time.

The back of this little book, with the panels thus ornamented, is reproduced in the Illustrated Catalogue of the Exhibition.

“LES RELIEURS FRANÇAIS”






### III

#### “LES RELIEURS FRANÇAIS”

BY E. THOINAN

“ES Relieurs Français” 1500-1800, by M. Ernest Thoinan, is, on the whole, the most important contribution to the History of Binding that has been made for many years. Before its appearance, M. Gruel’s “Manuel Historique et Alphabétique” might fairly claim to that position. It was, indeed, the first attempt to put on anything like a scientific basis, the information concerning binders and their craft that is to be found scattered up and down the many books about books for which the French have always been famous.

In France bibliographical gossip has ever met with a ready reception, and the outsides of books have proved almost as interesting as their insides ; but the works are few in number that give the results of serious research on the subject. When we have mentioned M. Leroux de Lincy's "*Jean Grolier, sa vie et sa bibliothèque*," M. Quentin Bauchart's "*Les femmes bibliophiles de France*," and MM. Marius-Michel's "*La Reliure Française*," we have named all before M. Gruel's book that repay study.

M. Thoinan's work is of a very different order to any of the above named, and is for the most part based upon documentary evidence contained in the records of the Guild of Booksellers, with which the craft of Binders was incorporated up to the end of the seventeenth century.

These documents were made use of both by La Caille and Lottin, by the former in his "*Histoire de l'Imprimerie et de la Librairie*," 1689, and by the latter in his "*Catalogue chronologique des Libraires et des Libraires-*

“LES RELIEURS FRANÇAIS”

Imprimeurs de Paris,” 1789. Neither of the authors, however, being interested in binding, made any distinction between the two trades, and the binder was confused with the bookseller. The records in question are in



CRIEUR DE CONFRÉRIES

the Bibliothèque Nationale, but there are also others in the Library of the Hôtel Carnavalet, which likewise contains the official lists issued yearly throughout the eighteenth century by the Binders and Gilders, after they formed a corporation of their own.

With this groundwork M. Thoinan has made an attempt, and a thoroughly successful one, to take the history of binders and binding out of the sphere of book-lovers' gossip and unexplained hypotheses, and to confine it to the facts for which there is undoubted authority. What the subject henceforth loses in romance it more than gains in historical truth. In this notice we shall point out the new ground which M. Thoinan's researches have enabled him to cover, and the assumptions which, repeated without authority by writer after writer, he at length firmly discards.

The book consists of three distinct parts: an account of the corporation of the Bookbinders and Guilders of the city of Paris; a brief, but very comprehensive, study of the different historical styles of binding, with illustrative plates and descriptive notes; and a biographical section, arranged in alphabetical order. The first part gives a full and detailed account of the history of the trade from its earliest times, an account never attempted

succinctly before. Here we meet with much fresh information, particularly in the chronicle of the vicissitudes the craft went through before it attained to final independence at the time of the Revolution.

From a very early date no one in Paris could pursue any craft which had relation to books without license from the University, which exercised complete control, but on the other hand obtained for this body of workers certain prerogatives, such as immunities from taxation, from providing a guard-contingent and the like.

The earliest statutes of the University date from 1275, but for long afterwards they make no distinction between binders and others engaged in bookmaking. In 1401, without any attempt at emancipation from the guidance of the University, the bookseller, binders, writers, illuminators, and parchment makers formed themselves into a confraternity, connected with the Church of St. André-des-Arts, and under the patronage of St. John the Baptist.

## BOOKBINDERS AND THEIR CRAFT

In 1467 the book business was no longer in a flourishing condition, and Louis XI was solicited for permission to modify the money regulations of the community, the members being unable to afford the necessary payments for masses. At the same time, the



SAINT ANDRÉ-DES-ARTS

king, wanting to create a national guard, caused all the trades to be represented in companies with a semi-military equipment, each under a banner of its own. With the introduction of printing the whole business of bookmaking naturally emerged from the

stagnation made evident by the petition of 1467, and in 1488 the increase of workers necessitated an edict of Charles VIII, limiting the number of those engaged in the production of books, who, being under the protection of the University, enjoyed an immunity from taxation. Louis XII, in his patronage of art and letters, specially exempted them, in 1513, from a war subsidy that was being raised, from various other impositions, and from all duties connected with the protection of the city, except in cases of extreme danger. This liberal protection was confirmed by François I and renewed by Henri II and Charles IX.

During the reign of Henri II, in 1549, a sumptuary law was passed, and in 1577 its provisions were extended so as to affect binders. The edict of that year forbade, among other things, any gilding on leather except in the service of princes or the church, and, in regard to books, specially set forth, “that it was permitted to gild the leaves simply, and to have only a gold line



on the covers with a centre-piece not bigger than a franc at most."

Like other similar efforts at sumptuary legislation, the edict of 1577 does not seem to have had the slightest effect, for it was actually at this time that there arose that elaborate style of book-ornamentation with which, rightly or wrongly, the name of Nicholas Eve has always been associated. In 1582, in consequence of difficulties connected with the parish of St. André and of its distance from the quarter chiefly inhabited by the trade, the confraternity transferred itself to the Pères Mathurins, and its ceremonies were henceforth transacted in the church of the Sainte-Trinité, belonging to those Fathers. In 1593 the King released all the trades from an obligation hitherto enforced, which demanded from every craftsman the execution of a chef d'œuvre on his admission as a qualified master. Henceforth it was sufficient to have served the time required by statute in each trade. The practice had evidently become an abuse,



## “LES RELIEURS FRANÇAIS”

inasmuch as the jurors, who were the elective body chosen from the trade, and to whom the presentation was made, were in the habit of destroying the book unless it was redeemed by the workman by a money



L'ÉGLISE DES MATHURINS

payment or some form of entertainment. It is interesting to observe that the binders never availed themselves of the exemption thus given, but that the necessity of offering a masterpiece to the jurors prevailed as

a trade regulation as long as the formal admission of masters existed.

In 1618 was issued the first general statute regulating the craft as distinguished from the University regulations in detail which had prevailed hitherto. This statute laid down general laws for the qualification of masters, terms of apprenticeship and the like. It was as a sequel to this new state of things that an attempt was made in 1621 to exclude gilders from the privileges of qualified membership, and to keep them in subordination as journeymen. It will be remembered that at this period booksellers were binders and binders booksellers. When the elaborate ornamentation of books had brought into existence a specialized class of workers, those gilders who confined themselves to tooling the leather covers, once admitted as masters, had also taken to themselves the selling of books. As long as they were an insignificant minority they had been admitted without demur, but by 1621 they had become a considerable body, and an at-

tempt was made to exclude them from the bookselling privilege by preventing them from becoming masters. The decision of Parliament was, however, in favour of the gilders.

It is in connection with this trial that the legend arose that the early bookgilders were gilders of boots and the other leather accessories of the dress of the period. M. Thoinan shows how this idea came to prevail, and the explanation is sufficient to completely dissipate it. One Ballagny having fallen into bad repute from dismissing a dishonest apprentice before the expiration of his time, the trade committee procured an injunction annulling the indentures of the lad and restraining Ballagny from selling books. Pigoreau, the former master of Ballagny, joined the latter in his defence, and the two secured judgment in their favour as master gilders and booksellers. A similar action was brought later on against other gilders, and then it was that the prosecution attempted to discredit the gilders

by the assertions that Pigoreau and Ballagny were originally nothing but boot-gilders, and had given up that branch of their craft and taken to what they considered the more distinguished one of book-gilding in order that they might constitute themselves book-sellers, the chief position of distinction at the time.

The ingenious special pleading on the part of the prosecutor is the only ground for the legend. Both the men named had served their apprenticeships, filled their time as journeymen, and been passed masters in conformity to the existing regulations. It is possible that in the very early days of stamped bindings, the lines and ornamental patterns that bordered them were done by the "gaufreurs" already in possession of the necessary tools for the purposes of their own special work of leather decoration; but in a very short time a certain section of these devoted themselves exclusively to the application of their art to books, and very soon indeed constituted a

class by themselves. In connection with this subject of bookgilders, M. Thoinan hazards an hypothesis which is not supported by any testimony. It is that the great designs were not carried out by the bookgilder at all, who, inasmuch as highly decorated books were not numerous, probably had not attained to the necessary experience and dexterity. It is more likely, he thinks, that they were worked by the leather-gilder, whose craft in the sixteenth century comprised the ornamentation, often very elaborate, of caskets, sheathes, jewel cases, and the small details of furniture covered in leather after the fashion of the day. These workmen, he imagines, alone possessed the taste and technical dexterity to interpret the patterns probably made by the great masters of design throughout that time. He believes, further, that the painted interlaced work, belonging more by inspiration and nature to their trade than to that of the gilder, was possibly invented as well as executed by them.

The history of the trade society during the seventeenth century is a record of its disputes with gold-beaters, and with leather-sellers who had raised their prices, and, most important of all, of the internal dissensions of the binder-booksellers, resulting in the final separation of the two trades in 1686. The edict of that year gave the parties one month in which to decide which profession they would adopt, and set forth the new regulations governing "Binders and Gilders of books of the city of Paris."

The University, which had not been consulted as to the separation, opposed it on behalf of the binders, but was obliged to give way. The seventeen articles of which the edict is made up are full of interest, but we have not space to dwell upon them. Binders were still obliged to live within the precincts of the University, the Guards of the corporation were selected by the King, and were to visit the workshops and see that the work was done according to regulations, the interests of the trade were safe-

guarded by strict rules relating to apprenticeships and masterships, and from time to time no apprentices were allowed to be taken if the state of business rendered this advisable.

It is interesting to note that in 1700 certain gilders who wanted to raise their prices informed against the binders who had refused their demand, stating that the latter were not sewing their books flexibly, according to regulation, but were “sawing in.” The binders in their defence admitted this, but said that the price of certain books did not allow of flexible binding, and the Court accepted their plea, deciding what books should henceforth be exempted from the regulations. The eighteenth century is taken up with the gradual revolt of the men against their masters, until the Revolution of 1791 finally suppressed all trade corporations.

We must now touch briefly on some of the disputed points about which M. Thoinan speaks with authority. He considers



that there is no warrant for attributing to the Eve family the style always coupled with their name, merely because Nicholas Eve happened to be the royal binder of the day. It is an assertion based on the idea that the books issued by the Eves as booksellers were necessarily bound by them. They might equally well have been executed in other binderies, and in fact the only binding done for Henri III, which is absolutely authenticated as from the workshop of Nicholas Eve "Le livre des statuts du St. Esprit," in the Bibliothèque Nationale, has a semis of flames and fleur-de-lys, with emblems and the royal arms, and no trace of the style associated with this binder.

The place of Le Gascon is another matter upon which the author is very emphatic, and about which he takes an equally opposite view to that of M. Gruel. It may be remembered that the latter in his "Manuel Historique" gave an exquisite reproduction of the binding in the Bibliothèque Nationale signed "Florimond Badier invenit et fecit,"

on which the well-known head is repeated fifty-two times.

M. Gruel with much ingenuity concluded that Le Gascon, whose real name has always remained unknown, but whose reputation was clearly established in 1622, must be identical with Florimond Badier. M. Thoinan, on the other hand, comes to a different conclusion. Badier, apprenticed to Jean Thomas in 1610, was admitted as a master binder in 1645. The style of interlacings defined by dotted or filigree work, on which the head is first seen, is quite distinct from the style which has a frame-work of lines sometimes broken at top, bottom and sides by the segments of a circle, and having clusters of flower-work at the corners, or grouped as a centre-piece, such flowers being mixed line and filigree work, and only an occasional ornament being in dots. The interlaced style first described is not found before 1645, and M. Thoinan considers that it constituted a new departure invented by Badier, and that the head is neither the por-

trait of Le Gascon nor a tool in common use by binders of the time, but the personal signature of Badier. As the head is not found on any binding before 1645, it is more likely that Badier should have initiated his career by its use than that it should belong to Le Gascon, who had been practising since 1622. It follows that all the pointillé bindings attributed to Le Gascon, having the head, executed for the brothers, Dupuy, Séguier, Fouquet, and others, should be assigned to Badier.

Mr. W. Y. Fletcher in an article on Florimond Badier, contributed to the first volume of "Bibliographica," is not in agreement with M. Thoinan. He considers that the "Imitation de Jésus Christ," printed in 1640, and preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale and the only other signed binding by Badier, "Les Plaidoyez et Harangues de M. Le Maistre," printed at Paris, in 1657, owned by the late Mr. Wakefield Christie Miller, are more likely to be clever imitations of the great master's manner.

“LES RELIEURS FRANÇAIS”

Of what character then, it may be asked, are the bindings done by Le Gascon? M. Thoinan considers that his style is that which prevailed for the quarter of a century after 1622, when he began to practice on his own account. This style is the framework of line straight or curved, with corners and clusters of flowers delicately line engraved, and with only an occasional detail in filigree. If the head is found on this kind of decoration, it is only on bindings after 1645, bindings executed by Badier in the older style.

Enough has been said to indicate the important character of M. Thoinan's book, which ought to find many readers in England as well as France.



# DESIGN IN BOOKBINDING





## IV

### DESIGN IN BOOKBINDING



IN the following remarks on the application of ornament to bindings, it is not desired to lay down any arbitrary rules. If, after the lapse of so many centuries, canons of art are still to seek, if the lesson of the Greeks in sculpture, of the Florentines in painting, of the Renaissance in decoration has still left the world without a formulated theory of æsthetics which obtains the complete consensus of opinion of civilized nations, how much less likely is it that the principles of decoration as applied to the humbler arts

can have become sufficiently crystallized for universal acceptance. As a matter of fact confusion of tongues on the subject of applied ornament is far greater now, when art is more conscious and less instinctive, than in the days when the craftsman wrought out of the fulness of his inspiration.

It has been ever so in the history of the arts, the period of free creation has never been one of theory, and when art and handicraft were practically indistinguishable, the artist would have been sorely puzzled to give a reason for the faith that was in him.

Only when the instinctive moment has given away to the self-conscious attitude has the need arisen for canons of taste and for analysis of the previous products of spontaneity. Unhappily the converse is also true. When the mind is exercised upon the vital questions of art—what may be its utterances, what modes of expression are legitimate, and the like—it is a sign sure and unfailing that the fullest and freest activity, the most spontaneous inspiration is for



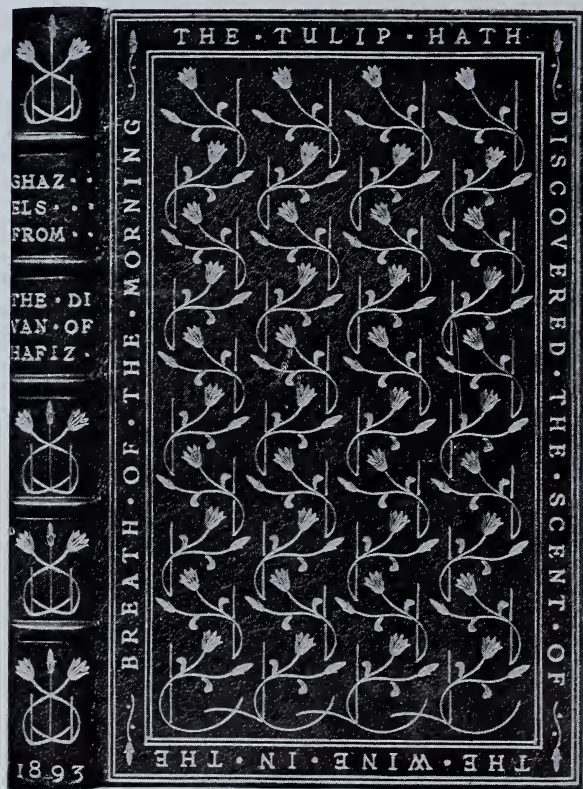
THE BARD OF THE DIMBOVITZA, 1892



the time in abeyance. If this is unavoidable, and indeed it seems to form part of a natural sequence, and if the attitude of self-conscious seeking belongs to our own age, as I think must be admitted, can we not at least take heart of grace and turn to some account this very minute sifting and weighing of past achievements? If we can no longer—at least for the moment—create, in the most real sense of the word, can we not discover why, in the matter of applied ornament, for instance, we should do certain things, and why we must assuredly not do certain other things?

Yet on looking round at the minor arts one is tempted to despair, for the only principle one can find of universal acceptance is that there is nothing that may not be done. The extravagant, the eccentric, the bizarre everywhere prevails. Mrs. Meynell has devoted one of her slight but finely handled essays on "The Rhythm of Life" to what she calls "the obsession of man by the flower." Is one not reminded of it by one's

chintzes and cretonnes, one's wall-papers, carpets, and curtains? "In the shape of



GHAZELS FROM THE DIVAN OF HAFIZ, 1893

the flower man's own paltriness revisits him — his triviality, his sloth, his cheapness, his



wholesale habitualness, his slatternly ostentation. What the tyranny has really grown to can be gauged nowhere so well as in country lodgings, where the most ordinary things of design and decoration have sifted down and gathered together, so that foolish ornament gains accumulative force and achieves a conspicuous commonness. Stem, petal, and leaf—the fluent forms that a man has not by heart, but certainly by rote—are woven, printed, cast, and stamped wherever restlessness and insimplicity have feared to leave plain spaces.”

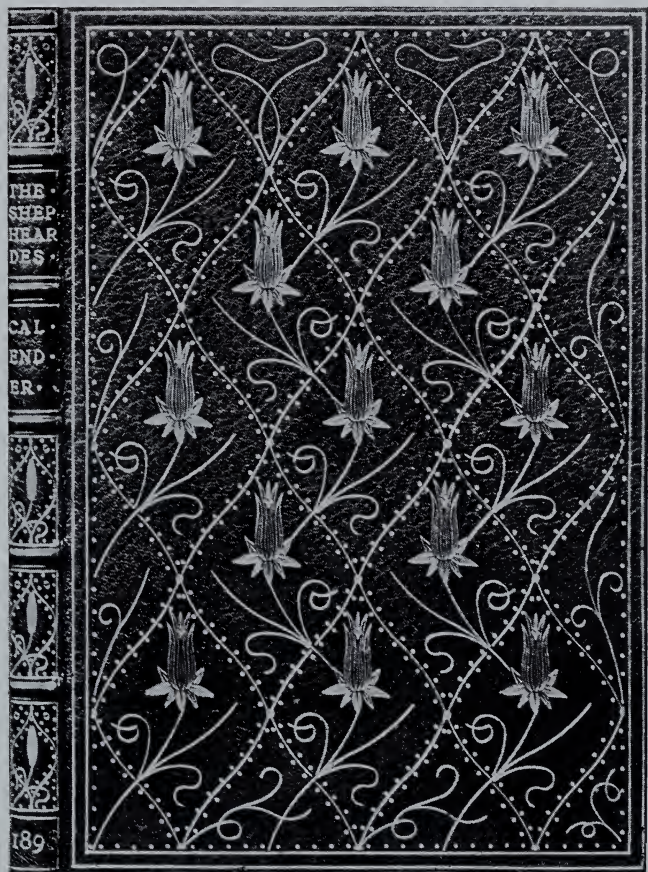
If we turn to our furniture is it not mostly covered with ornament—save the mark—so that the quality of its material is hidden, which perhaps as it happens may not be wholly without intent? Be that as it may, it is at least a subject for reflection that even the oak that has descended to us, in its plain simplicity, from our forefathers, must perforce be carved upon with all manner of puerile patterns, before it can prove marketable.



## BOOKBINDERS AND THEIR CRAFT

An early critic of Mr. Cobden Sanderson's bindings, somewhat indignant at the high prices he obtained, thus describes his work with caustic irony: "His soul is as much in what he leaves out as in what he puts in—you seem to pay for reticence." Unconsciously this writer hit upon a great principle, almost the greatest in decorative matters, which, if it only obtained as it should do, would save us from much of the vulgar meanness that prevails in every-day minor art. How many of us would not gladly pay for reticence if so be we could find it! But, alas! the public is of the same mind as the critic. In proportion to the price must be the quantity of ornament, and so it comes about that the eye is fatigued by its presence in season and out of season, and competitors in the market of production vie with each other as to the amount that can be offered for the money. Is it wholly impossible to educate public taste in this one matter? Every year now brings its exhibition of arts and crafts in different parts of

## DESIGN IN BOOKBINDING



THE SHEPHEARDES CALENDER (KELMSCOTT PRESS), 1895

the world, and almost every month its practical hand-books, its treatises on the theory and practice of design, or on the principles and analysis of ornament. Is it not possible

## BOOKBINDERS AND THEIR CRAFT

to teach that the due subordination of decoration is every bit as important as a feeling for beauty of form, or a grasp of the limitations imposed by the character of the material and the tools that work it. The designer who does not know where and when to stay his hand fails just as much as the man who has no sense of proportion, no instinct for grace of curve, or purity of line; fails even more perhaps than the man who treats metal like wood, or stone like iron.

To learn the lesson of appropriate book decoration we must take a look at some of the early work. And by appropriate we do not mean in any way allusive. The size and relative dimensions of length and breadth, not necessarily the written or printed content, should give the key to the design on the outside of the book, though the subject-matter may often suggest the motive for a pattern. Some of the very early stamped work done in England toward the end of the twelfth century is as significant for our purpose as any that came later,

## DESIGN IN BOOKBINDING

in the days when binding has been justly celebrated as reaching its zenith as an art.



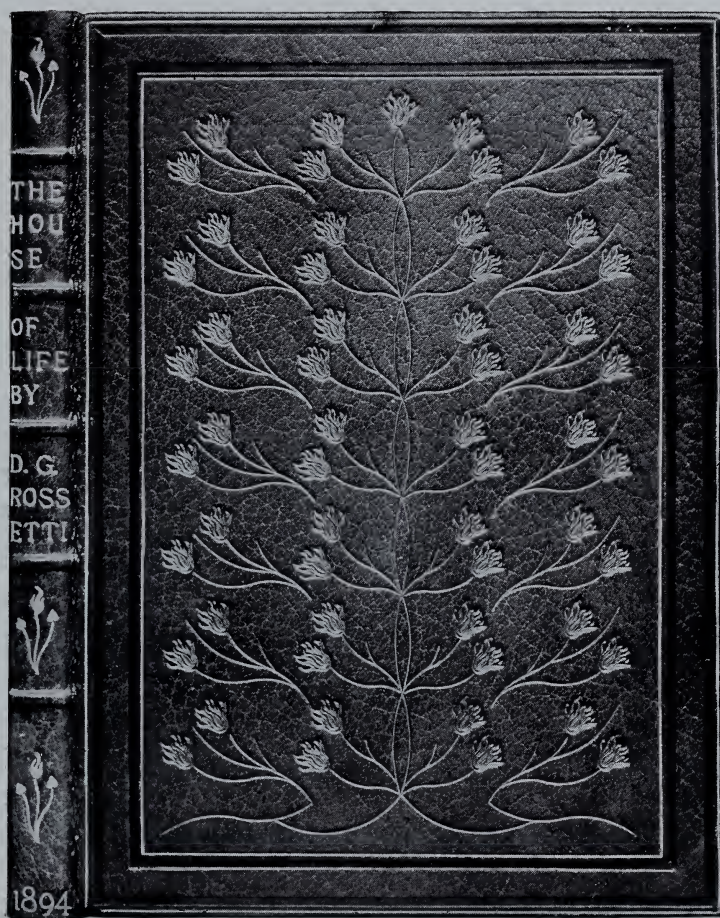
A CHILD'S GARDEN OF VERSES. R. L. STEVENSON, 1885

The books bound for Bishop Pudsey, and still preserved in the cathedral library at Durham are decorated most frequently with

dies of a varied kind representing men on horseback, fabulous animals, and formal designs. The scheme or ornament on the side is generally a parallelogram formed by lines of these designs, but in some examples there is interlaced chain-work of Eastern character which also frames the sides in lines that run parallel with the boards.

The Netherlandish bindings of the middle of the fourteenth century show us another kind of decoration, strong and simple and eminently adjusted to the natural lines of the book. This is the panel stamp, sometimes occupying most of the cover, sometimes used only as a central ornament, sometimes again bordered by a motto or text in the decorative letters of the time, which not infrequently included the name of the binder. These panels were either composed of spiral foliage containing birds and beasts, or they were pictorial and represented scenes like the adoration of the Magi and the Annunciation. But the most attractive pictorial panel stamps are to be found on the





THE HOUSE OF LIFE. D. G. ROSSETTI, 1894





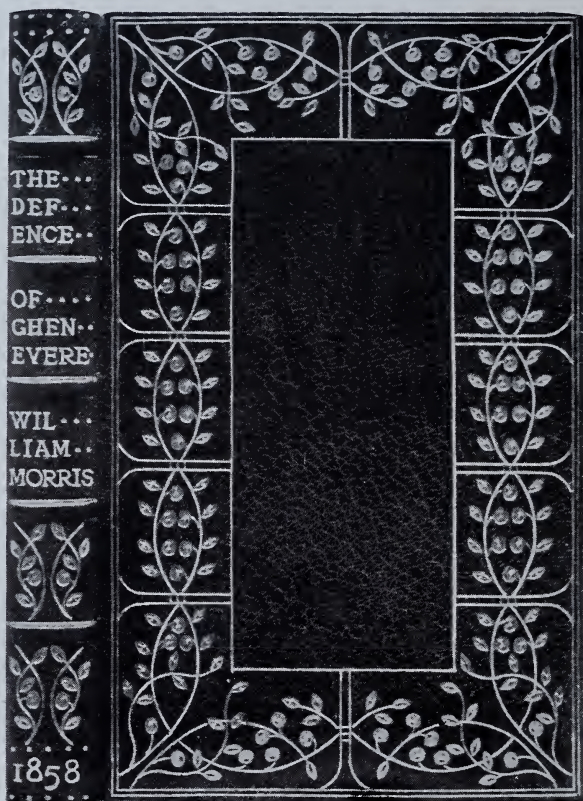
French bindings of the period. Most of these represent scriptural scenes, but some few are *parlant*, like the well-known one of the Rouen binder Jehan Moulin, in which the device of a miller and his sacks has a punning allusion to the name.

In all this early stamped work we get these two main schemes of decoration, the border and the centre panel. The character of the designs, too, was bold and broad until degeneration set in toward the end of the sixteenth century. At its best period there was subordination of detail to breadth of effect; the main lines of the ornamentation, too, were always distinct, so that there was both balance and contrast, which in the matter of surface decoration may almost be said to correspond to light and shade in the field of pictorial art.

The next period during which the instinct for appropriateness in design seems most marked is that of the early Italian and French bindings, when gold tooling had become established. At that time the feeling

BOOKBINDERS AND THEIR CRAFT

for symmetry prevailed over all else, and no doubt in the special geometrical character



THE DEFENCE OF GUENEVERE. WILLIAM MORRIS, 1858

of many of the designs it was often carried to excess. Notwithstanding this, however,

there is no time at which there was such largeness of conception, such harmony of line, and, above all, such dignity of result. Nor was there any lack of variety of treatment. Indeed, one is struck by the wealth of resource shown by the designers of the time, considering that the framework was so largely geometrical. Sometimes intricate and elaborate, at others simple and severe, the interlacings are rarely repeated. The spaces are treated with admirable reticence; it is but seldom they are filled in with any detail, though occasionally in parts they are studded with gold dots. This, it may be noted, is one of the lessons we may learn from a study of the bindings of this particular time—the value to the design of those blank spaces between the lines of gold that of themselves decorate so simply yet so richly the covers of those early printed books. There is a fine sense of proportion in the severity of many of the patterns, while grace is attained in the character of the lines and curves instead of by triviality of

detail, which is so often the modern method of achieving the same end.

At this point one may, perhaps, be pardoned for making a slight digression on the subject of the fashion that has prevailed so long at home and abroad of reproducing the designs of early French bindings.

There is one special attraction in the old work that lies quite apart from its beauty and instinct of design. That attraction is the spontaneous handling, the freedom of treatment that characterizes all the bindings in the golden age of the art before the last part of the sixteenth century. We may find, no doubt, some explanation of this in the want of technical dexterity which has since been acquired, in the fact that the standard of finish had not taken the undue position which it has since occupied, but the real reason is probably that the executor like the designer was also an artist, and in his hands the result never attained to mechanical precision, but was always instinct with movement and life. In the transfer

## DESIGN IN BOOKBINDING

of the design to the cover the spirit of the designer was in a measure transferred. The present-day imitations of Groliers, Eves and



A SHADOW OF DANTE. M. F. ROSSETTI, 1871

Le Gascons are lifeless copies. They are, indeed, executed with far more technical skill than the originals, often with far more accuracy of line and curve, but the spirit of



the artist is absent, and the result is a triumph of formal skill, not an achievement of artistic feeling.

It was during the reign of Henri II that bindings reached their highest perfection. At no subsequent period have they been so bold and fine in design and so unfettered by any tradition. To begin with, the decorative conception in itself was in the grand manner, and when the graceful scroll work and interlacings were diversified by fleurons and other small tools, these in no way interfered in detail with the effect as a whole. How consummate a period this was, not only in binding but in all the decorative arts, may be judged from the fact that it has been the main source of inspiration for all subsequent ages. It is, indeed, on account of these things of great price in the past that we have so much that is trivial in the present. For to the excellence of that past is due the machine-made reproduction of its detail, a detail that, removed from its setting, is often mere futility—"the multi-

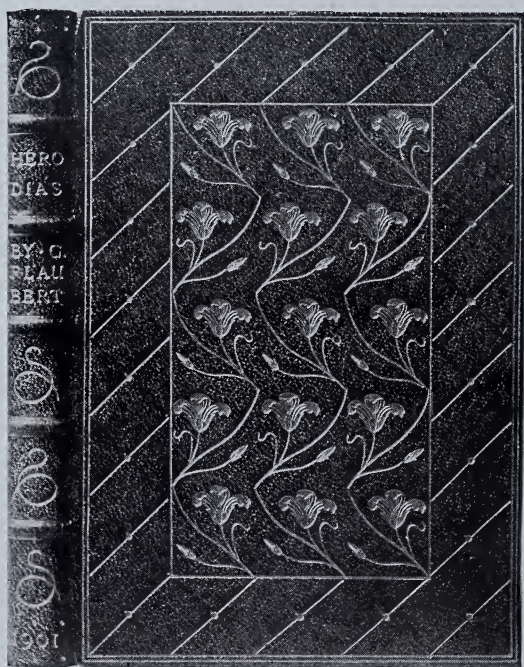
plicity that is the disgrace of decoration.” If art is to be art, it must have some organic quality, and that quality is one that can never be multiplied, and least of all by the perfection of mechanical processes.

Let us take a look at some of the other styles in binding that have a well-deserved reputation. And first that of the Eves, a family of binders who are said to have worked between 1578 and 1631. The geometrically shaped compartments still remain often linked together by interlaced circles. The centres of these compartments are filled with small fleurons instead of the well-articulated moresque ornaments of Grolier’s time, and they are surrounded by scrolls and spirals and branches of laurels and palm. It is an extremely elaborate style, carried out with much felicity, and resulting in great richness of effect. No other has had so much admiration bestowed upon it. The compartments in its composition are very numerous, the branch-work, which is the most original feature, is entirely light and graceful and unsparingly



## BOOKBINDERS AND THEIR CRAFT

interwoven, while the entire field of the cover is filled with delicate detail. But we miss the architectural qualities of the earlier



HERODIAS. G. FLAUBERT (VALE PRESS), 1901

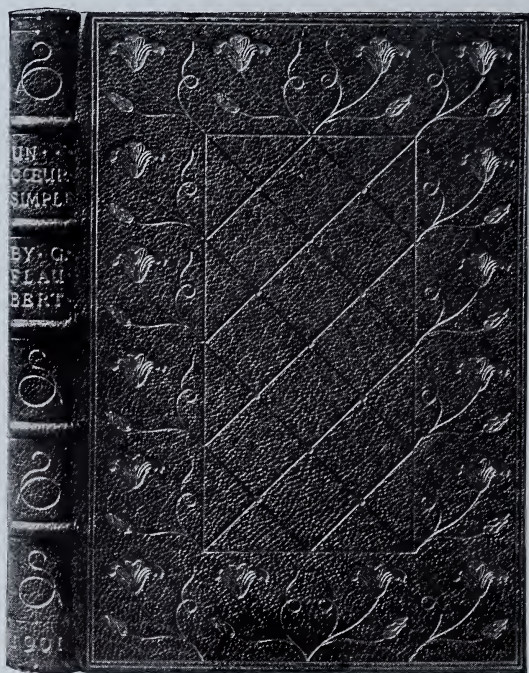
period—the unification of parts that give the sense of wholly just proportion, the fine spaces of untouched leather that show the complete control of the designer's fancy.

In the Eve bindings, it is true, we see great imaginative qualities and much resource, but the artist's fancy is too unchecked, and there is a restlessness in the result that does not make for satisfaction. If it is "the perfection of richness in book-decoration"—and it would be hard to deny this description of the style claimed for it—it is not in our opinion the perfection of appropriateness, especially when seen on volumes of large size.

The next well-known style—that of Le Gascon—is substantially a further development of the Eve school, though very different in character. Just as the Eves achieved originality, not in the framework of their designs, but by the happy accident of their branch decoration, so Le Gascon acquired a manner through that novel change in his scroll-work which is always associated with his name. Ever since the time of Grolier, when individual ornaments were rather large and like in character to those used by Aldus at his press, the tools had been getting ever

## BOOKBINDERS AND THEIR CRAFT

finer and finer, until in the hands of the unknown binder called Le Gascon they reached the extreme of delicacy. He took the geomet-

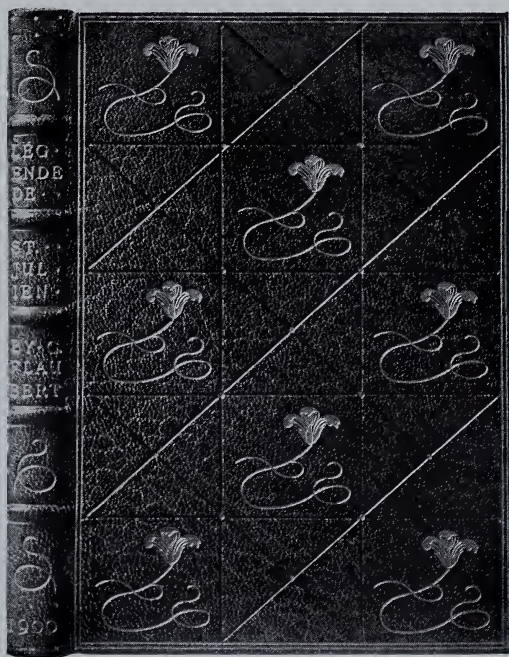


UNE VIE SIMPLE. G. FLAUBERT (VALE PRESS), 1901

rical framework of the Eves as the basis of his designs, but had all his ornaments cut with a dotted face instead of solid line. In what is believed to be his early work he used

## DESIGN IN BOOKBINDING

a substantial frame-work of continuous line, but later on he abandoned it and made up his designs of the *pointillé* ornament alone,



LÉGENDE DE ST. JULIEN. G. FLAUBERT (VALE PRESS), 1900

which resulted in a tracery of the most minute character. In that early work he is seen at his best, for, as he nearly always used morocco of a brilliant red, the contrast be-



tween the bands bordered by solid line and the spaces within filled with a mass of sparkling arabesque, results in an effect of color not often equalled and certainly never surpassed.

In a certain sense a Le Gascon binding of the simpler period fulfills the conditions of proportion and balance better than one of the Eve school. For in the first place, though the detail is equally lavish, yet being all of fine *pointillé* scroll-work, there is not the want of repose about the whole which results from that admixture of diverse ornament which characterizes the Eve style in its latest manifestations. And in the second place the strongly marked bands of color above described emphasize the lay-out of the design and so preserve its architectural qualities unimpaired. The firmness of drawing in the ground-plan is not tampered with by the intrusion of detail.

There is little more that is instructive from our point of view in the history of binding. The Vandyke borders of Derome,

inspired by the lace-work of the time, have no qualities of design. Indeed, some of the English and Scotch bindings of the last quarter of the seventeenth century and beginning of the eighteenth show more instinct for appropriate decoration than any later work in the French school. Henceforth multiplicity of detail and repetition of parts seem to do duty for design, and the simplicity and dignity of the early masters are forgotten in a profuse and meaningless ornamentation.

In conclusion I must add a few words concerning the illustrations that accompany the text. It is not suggested that they are adequate expressions of the principles that have been set forth in the course of this paper, which seem to underlie the best work of every period. Nor is it to be assumed that they are in any way put forward as models for imitation, since imitation, though it may be the sincerest form of flattery, is at the root of all that is most impotent in matters of art or handicraft.

## BOOKBINDERS AND THEIR CRAFT

Their purport is chiefly to show what can be done with a few tools in the direction above indicated, under the guiding principles of appropriateness of line, simplicity of effect and reticence in the matter of display. The three last show the same tool disposed in a panel, a border and an all-over design.



SOME FRENCH BINDERS OF TO-DAY



## V

### SOME FRENCH BINDERS OF TO-DAY



FRENCH craftsmen of to-day, as far as binding is concerned, fall naturally into two classes, those who still repeat and adapt old models, and those who are bent upon seeking some new thing. The first consider that the right traditions of ornament have been given once and for all, and need only be followed with ever-increasing skill and technical perfection ; the second feel that new departures are necessary if the art is to respond to modern needs. The conservatives restrict their ornaments to the strictly traditional, admitting no further novelty than that which consists in fresh

adaptations of the same "tools," while the reformers will sooner go out of the lines hitherto recognized as legitimate, than continue to work in the well-worn grooves. It is the old opposition between "les classiques" and "les jeunes," often recurrent in the literary history of France, and permeating, as it would seem, the whole artistic life of the country in a way that has no parallel here. Such a cleavage, well defined among poets and painters of the moment, is thus repeated in miniature in the humbler arts, greatly to their benefit, and to that of the public as well.

That the old traditions of any art at its best and most inspired periods should be kept green is a safeguard against its deterioration and lapse into the merely novel and eccentric. That efforts should be made on the lines of a new interpretation of the scope and possibilities of that art prevents the lifeless copying of past achievement. It is thus that such opposition benefits the art or craft itself; but for the public, too, it is of equal

value. They have on the one side, not only the actual models of the past, of which perhaps they must go in search, but their translations in the hands of the modern worker ; and on the other side the attempts to get away from these models and to invent anew. The tendency toward the approval of mere eccentricity, which we must admit to be prevalent at the present time, has thus a chance of being held in check by the constant presence of that which has become classical. The art of binding will never be able to free itself from the support of tradition. If there are modern books belonging exclusively in initiation to our own age, and therefore lending themselves most appropriately to new experiments by the binder who is original and personal in his work, there will always be others, numerous and valuable as well, that it will be impossible to fitly decorate without a profound study of all that was best in the past.

In noticing some typical French binders of to-day, we propose to take them in the

following sequence: those who are purely classic in their decoration; those who, mainly classic, have yet a sympathy with new departures and have contributed toward them, and lastly, those who, in the attempt to break fresh ground, have, more or less, invented a style of their own.

If there seems less to be said about the first than about some of the others, it is only because they are content not to challenge criticism, and because their work is confined to lines well-known to all amateurs in binding.

And first we will take M. Chambolle, whose house was founded about 1834 by Duru. Duru learnt his solid "forwarding"—what the French so aptly call "*le corps d'ouvrage*"—as a pupil of Bauzonnet, in whose workshop Trautz was then a "finisher." He was desirous of setting up together with Trautz, but Bauzonnet, who had the same idea, carried the day, and his firm became that of Trautz-Bauzonnet, while Duru started on his own account. His Jansenist

## SOME FRENCH BINDERS OF TO-DAY

bindings soon became famous, and later on, with Marius Michel as gilder, and a clientèle of the richest booklovers of his day, he



A BINDING BY CHAMBOLLE FOR GAUTIER'S "MLLE. DE MAUPIN"

did much elaborate work, although always of a traditional kind. His reputation was so great that even old bindings were destroyed that the books might be clothed afresh by Duru. In 1861 he began to think of re-



tirement, and associated Chambolle with him for the next two years, that he might pass on to a worthy successor the habits and practices of his house. These Chambolle has kept up, and although in the matter of style he has never adventured upon new paths, his bindings are among the best of their kind.

Another name, equally well-known, is that of M. Marcelin Lortic, who, since the death of his father in 1892, has carried on his business alone. It was in 1840 that Lortic père came to Paris determined to make a name for himself in the craft that he loved. With patient resolution he gradually gained great mastery over it, winning medals from time to time at different exhibitions, until the government finally recognized his services to art by giving him the Legion of Honor in 1878. The secret of his success, though an open one, is none the less difficult of imitation. A stern critic of his own results, he was never satisfied with falling below his own standard of perfection, and in the attainment of this

SOME FRENCH BINDERS OF TO-DAY



A BINDING BY LORTIC FILS FOR POE'S "TAMERLANE," 1894

ideal he would often strip and re-do the work until it met with his approval.

His feeling with regard to books was of the same order. Nothing short of the most perfect specimens were fit for his efforts as an artist, and when he died there were some two hundred volumes, the best of their kind

in bindings, executed by himself. He was, perhaps, the first binder who attempted to leave the beaten track. Up to that time there had been no higher ideal among his fellows than to produce imitation after imitation of the old models. There was no suggestion of originality or innovation of any sort. His misfortune was, that, as he had but few modern books entrusted to him, his innovations were often inopportune, and were put upon classics that a finer taste would have exempted from decorative experiment.

One son, M. Edmond Lortic, has inherited his taste for books, and is well known as a collector of valuable editions; the other, Marcelin, was apprenticed as a binder at fourteen, and continued to learn "forwarding" for four years, when he became a "finisher," and has ever since devoted himself to that branch of the business. Like M. Chambolle, he prides himself upon being a pure classic, and it is not often that he deviates from the most beaten track.

We pass on to M. Emile Mercier, successor to François Cuzin, who died in 1890, and for whom he worked as gilder. M. Mercier began his apprenticeship in 1869, with M. Magnier, where he remained three and a half years. After that he was in two houses of second-rate importance until 1876, when he took over the whole bound morocco work at M. Smeers. In 1882 he joined M. Cuzin, from whose taste and counsel he benefited greatly, and of whose friendly aid he can never say enough. For eight years their collaboration was of the closest and warmest nature, only ending with M. Cuzin's death. Two years later M. Mercier took over the direction of the business, and his great object ever since has been to sustain the reputation of his predecessor. All the gilding exhibited on the bindings of M. Cuzin in 1889 was done by M. Mercier, and a contemporary binder, writing of this display, describes it in the following terms: "We have rarely seen 'finishing' executed with such vigour; the decoration

## BOOKBINDERS AND THEIR CRAFT

seems to be chased in massive gold. It is certainly of extraordinary solidity and will retain its brilliancy during many years."



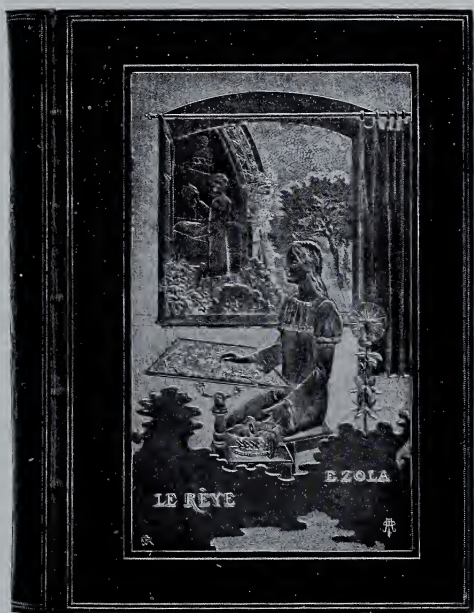
A BINDING BY MERCIER FOR "ROMEO AND JULIET"

The French have a higher standard of the technical qualities of "finishing" than exists elsewhere, and criticise it entirely apart from design, or anything else connected



SOME FRENCH BINDERS OF TO-DAY

with the binding. It is interesting to observe that in the opinion of his brother



A BINDING BY GRUEL FOR ZOLA'S "LE RÉVE"

craftsmen M. Mercier is the finest gilder of the moment.

M. Leon Gruel's business is the oldest established of all described in this paper. Founded in 1811 by M. Desforges it was given

over to his son-in-law Gruel in 1825. On the death of her husband in 1846 Madame Gruel continued the conduct of the house till 1851, when she re-married with M. Englemann, a printer of note. Henceforth the firm, under the name of Gruel-Englemann, organized a new departure in the issue of fine editions of Service books, missals and the like, of which it has since made a specialty, but at the same time the binding department was kept up to its former level of excellence. In 1875 Madame Englemann, again left a widow, associated her two sons with her; M. Leon Gruel, son of her first marriage, became head of the bindery, and M. Edouard Englemann, eldest son of the second marriage, took over the direction of the printing and publishing department. From its earliest days the business has always had the highest reputation, both for initiative in artistic matters, as well as for irreproachable execution in the detail of its many-sided achievements. It has indeed been the nursery of all the chief binders of



the time, and no other house in any country has a roll-call of such distinguished names. Marius Michel père remained there twelve years, and only left it to establish himself as the most celebrated gilder of the century. Chambolle and Thouvenin were there also, as well as David, Thibaron, Motte, Joly, Loisetier and others, who have since founded binderies of their own. Nor must we omit the names of Rossigneux, a designer of extraordinary genius, Liénard, the designer and carver in wood, the brothers Sollier, enamellers of exquisite taste, all of whom contributed toward the revival of mediæval bindings, of which M. Gruel discovered the traditions anew. To the French the decorated Prayer Book is a form of luxury, and on the occasion of a first Communion or of marriage affords the opportunity for a costly offering. It will thus easily be seen that on devotional works can be lavished a variety of binding that finds no place in the ordinary library. M. Gruel has employed all the decorative arts as adjuncts to the

embellishments of the "livre de piété."  
Painted mosaics, enamels, wrought metal in



A BINDING BY GRUEL

clasps, corners and panels, sculptured wood and ivory, the monastic invention of "cuir ciselé," all these arts of many kinds and many ages have been applied in faultless

workmanship to the Service Book of this century.

The work of his house is, perhaps, better known in America than that of any other, on account of the important collection sent to the Chicago Exhibition, which comprised a carefully studied variety of book-covers, including most of the kinds above mentioned. The possession of a very fine collection of ancient bindings has enabled M. Léon Gruel to become an authority on the history of binding and to make researches which took shape a few years back in the "*Manuel historique et bibliographique de l'amateur des relieurs.*" This book, finely illustrated, is the most important work of reference we possess, though since its publication, M. Thoinan and others have written much and learnedly on the subject.

Besides the conduct of his varied and important business, of which he became sole head and representative in 1891, M. Gruel finds time to take a real interest in the technical education of the coming genera-

tion of binders. He has been president of the *Chambre Syndicale Patronale des Relieurs*, etc., since its foundation in 1891, and it is through the genial and generous attitude he has always maintained toward his brother binders, as well as through his disinterested labours, that it is now established on a thoroughly sound basis. His help and advice are always forthcoming to the genuine lover of bindings, and the present brief account of what is being done in Paris at the present time owes its existence to his friendly aid.

Another binder, who, together with M. Gruel, may be said to form a connecting link between the old and the new, is M. Henri Michel, son of the great gilder of that name. His father, born in 1821, made his first apprenticeship at Lyons, but came to Paris in 1838, and worked for a short time in the atelier of Reiss. But in 1839 he went to M. Gruel, where he remained as gilder for ten years, getting more and more perfection of touch with every year that passed. In 1849, he set up for himself, and from that

time till 1876 he worked as finisher for all the chief binders in Paris. His first clients were Duru and Capé, but very soon others followed, till his employers included David, Hardy, and Chambolle, Thibaron, Cuzin, and every other binder of note. During more than a quarter of a century, Jean Michel, or Marius Michel, as he by that time called himself, continued to put forth the most exquisite "tooling" that has ever been seen. His taste was excellent, for while at that period there was no idea of invention in the matter of design, but only of copying the old masters, Marius Michel went straight to the very best period for his inspiration. The great unknown designer of the Renaissance, who decorated the books of Henri II was his master, and to that style, the most purely classic in the best sense, he kept faithful throughout his life. Some of his best work is in the library at Chantilly, for the Duc d'Aumale, during his exile under the Empire, entrusted to Capé a succession of books, which, gilt by Marius Michel,

constitute the former's chief title to fame. Unfortunately, most of Marius Michel's early work bears only the name of the binder who employed him, but after a time amateurs demanded his signature as well, and the volumes that have it are of great value in consequence of their limited number. Michel died about twelve years ago, at the age of seventy. His son, Henri, born in 1846, went into the workshops at sixteen, but he also attended the lectures at the *École des Arts Décoratifs*, which have ever rendered much service to French industries. In 1866, he undertook the important task of making tracings for his father of all the historic bindings; and he gave especial study to the decoration of the backs that were in keeping with the sides, while he himself executed many of the most important backs for his father's clients. In conjunction with his father, he wrote two important works on Binding, the first serious attempts toward a literature of the subject. These were "*La Reliure Française depuis l'invention*



## SOME FRENCH BINDERS OF TO-DAY



A BINDING BY MARIUS MICHEL FOR GÉRARD DE NERVAL'S "SYLVIE"

de l'Imprimerie jusqu'à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle," and "La Reliure Française commerciale et industrielle depuis l'invention de l'Imprimerie jusqu'à nos jours," published in 1880 and 1881, respectively. In 1889, he published "L'ornementation des reliures



modernes," which sets forth, with admirable clearness, his views upon design. He was the first to advocate novelty of treatment, and to deprecate the prevailing fashion of putting facsimiles of the great masters on every book, new as well as old. He shows that the distinction of the nineteenth century binding is the attempt to get appropriateness of design, and dares even to find it amiss in the old masters that they clothed their most serious as well as their lightest works with the same fashion of ornament. Such a point of view, coming, as it does, from so perfect a reproducer of past chefs-d'œuvre, marks an era in the modern history of the art. Not less important are his remarks on the servile copying of patterns. The artist and artisan in former days made his careful sketch in church or museum, till, penetrated with the spirit of that which he admired, he was able to reproduce at will from memory, adding at the same time a part of himself. Now, in these days of cheap reproduction, everyone buys a print

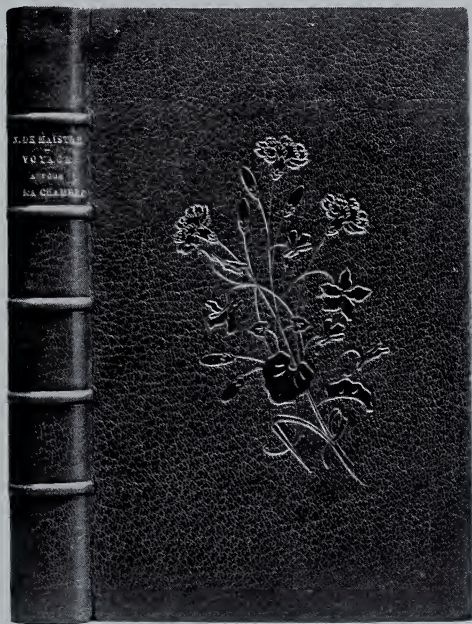
or photograph, and all that is demanded of the workman is to copy it with slavish accuracy. Thirty years ago everything was good except what was modern, and the collector forgot, that, had the amateur of the past, himself a collector also, not appreciated the best that was modern in his time, some of the finest traditions in art could never have existed. Neither Mazarin nor Fouqué made Le Gascon copy Grolier. A style is not made in a day, but certainly entire preoccupation with the past will do much to hinder the possibility of that pressure of taste that constitutes a style. In this same treatise he insists further on the necessity of not mixing different motives, of keeping the details in harmony with the general scheme, and of letting the main idea always remain prominent, instead of being lost in accessories. The binder, too, should recognize the natural limitations of the craft, and abide by them. He should not attempt to entrench upon other arts, nor try to express more than he is able in his own field.

The spirit of the text should be suggested in colour and decoration, but the direct imagery of material motives should be left to the gift book and the advertising cover. It must be said that M. Michel has exemplified in his own work all that he here lays down as canons of taste. He set the example of fresh initiative by being the first to employ floral motives in the decoration of his bindings, drawing the flowers in the first instance straight from nature and subsequently conventionalizing them for the tool-cutter. His advice—to leave the making of copies and try new roads—has been adopted by several of the younger men, as we shall show later, but the restrictions of taste he advocates have, in some cases, not been adopted, and the bizarre and rococo are apparently thought to constitute a sufficient claim to originality.

The illustrations here given of M. Michel's work are not worthily representative, but twenty-six of his best books are reproduced in M. Béraldi's "*La Reliure du XIX<sup>e</sup>*"

## SOME FRENCH BINDERS OF TO-DAY

siècle.” An extremely facile and versatile designer, his styles are numerous and always undergoing fresh developments. Besides



A BINDING BY MARIUS MICHEL FOR XAVIER DE MAISTRE'S  
"VOYAGE AUTOUR DE MA CHAMBRE."

those already alluded to, we find one more recent, showing a certain reaction against gold. In this the mosaics are executed with fine gradation of colour, and all the tooling is

blind. In some of the mosaic work, in which real iridescence of colour is obtained, the effects are got by staining. But everywhere there is such mastery of line and curve, such perfect feeling for tone and tint, as well as such exquisite workmanship, that gold would seem but a vulgar adjunct. Some few years ago M. Michel exhibited a case of bindings in this style at the Champ de Mars, of which all the decoration was done by his own hand. His influence on the most modern school of binding has been considerable, as it may well be, considering how sound he is as a theorist and how inspiring as a practitioner. He may be said to have fought equally for novelty of ideas, the restraint of a fine taste, and the standard of a technique entirely above reproach.

For some time after 1885 the passion for novelty showed itself in the application to binding of the various materials employed at the period prior to the invention of printing—wood, engraved and carved, plaques of metal or porcelain, ivories, enamels and

miniatures, all found an application to the book covers of that time. But by the majority morocco was still considered the ideal covering, and to such the desire for a new form of decoration resulted in the creation of the symbolic binding. This idea that the decorative outside of a book should be emblematic of what is within, has obtained an extraordinary success in France and is especially characteristic of the last part of this century. Needless to say that the idea proved a complete snare to the craftsman who was not an artist. It proved, perhaps, no less a pitfall to the imaginative, the wildness of whose fancy was their only stock in trade, and who considered that eccentricity of motive could cover any amount of technical inefficiency.

While advocating novelty of treatment, it was against this exuberant but unrestrained effort that Marius Michel directed part of the pamphlet above mentioned, which appeared shortly before the exhibition of 1889, and brought him no small amount of unpopularity among his fellows. It did not take



long before his criticism, coupled with the more educated taste of the collector, reduced the emblematic binding to comparatively reasonable limits; but as it still has a considerable hold on French taste, and as it is achieved with more or less success by certain of the younger generation of binders, it may be well to examine it a little more in detail.

It differs, then, from the older methods both in invention and technique. Instead of the same kind of detail being worked on almost every volume alike, if not in the same disposition, we get an attempt to make the binding symbolize the contents, an effort to obtain a sort of allegorical ornament, suited to that particular book and to no other. But this leads in some cases to dangerous results. In order to produce these effects the technique is not confined to the old lines, but the treatment of leather is forced into directions to which it does not naturally lend itself. Some of the modelled leather work, for example, attempts to give effects of sculp-



ture ; some, that is treated in mosaic, to go even further and reproduce the art of the illustrator ; so that we find occasional results like the bindings of Wiener, which resemble reduced posters more than anything else.

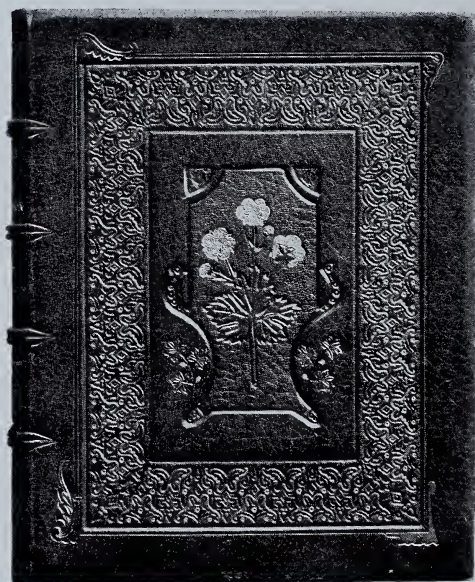
It may probably be said, without fear of contradiction, that no art makes any genuine advance by going outside the province to which it is restricted by its material, and the application of that material. Attempts by binders to invade the field of the other decorative arts, even if they are allied arts, will never really satisfactorily extend the scope of their own.

May we not possibly go a step further and say that the outside should certainly not attempt to reveal the inside, that the extravagance of picture bindings are a mistake, and that the allegory of the decoration, if there is one, should assuredly not be such that he who runs can read.

Of the younger generation of binders, the innovators of their day who strike the personal note in what they undertake, we will

## BOOKBINDERS AND THEIR CRAFT

first mention M. Pétrus Ruban, who, born in 1857, founded his business in 1879 and gained a silver medal at the Exhibition of



A BINDING BY RUBAN

the Palais de l'Industrie in 1886. About ten years ago he started the special kind of binding to which he now chiefly devotes himself, and only within the last few years has he signed his books inside with name and

date—a new departure that he considers marks the time when he ceased to do any but the most highly finished work. He has done work in each of what we may for convenience call the classic and symbolic styles. It seemed for some time as if he intended to associate himself entirely with the latter, and his inlaid morocco bindings, modelled and coloured by hand in addition, ranked with the finest specimens of their class. But he seems of late to have returned with fresh interest to that special technique of the binder—gold tooling—in which individual genius showed itself during the best period of the art. That, of course, need not be disassociated from inlay, and in the blending of harmonious tones M. Ruban shows a most delicate feeling for colour.

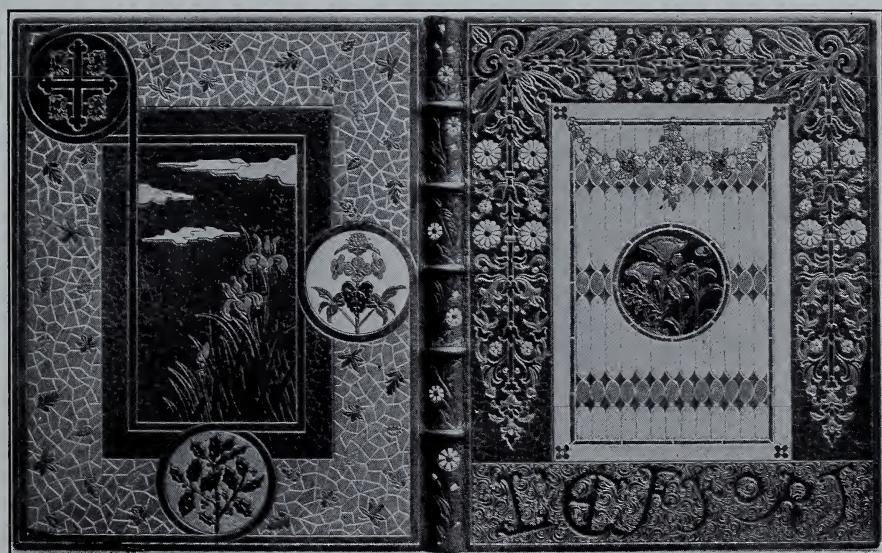
In the binding of “*L’Effort*,” we see the almost complete range of his technique, and each of the panels has some of the inlaid and modelled work with which his earlier efforts are associated. Another illustration is that of a “*doublure*,” more simple and

in the opinion of many more attractive by reason of the fewer elements introduced. An admirable example of morocco, modelled by hand in relief, with little or no gold, may be found in the cover of a fine paper copy of the celebrated "*Histoire des quatre fils d'Aymon*," illustrated by Grasset, and now of extreme rarity. The foundation is a bronze-morocco with mosaics of different colours that blend rather than contrast with it, and all the work is "blind," with the exception of a little dull "old gold" in the mosaics, and the flowers which are studded with brilliant gold dots. This book, like the work of M. Marius Michel, somewhat similar in character, shows how mistaken are the majority who think no binding decorated unless it glistens with gold. The methods employed in this kind of modelling, for which none of the stamps are used that constitute the "tools" of the ordinary finisher, may perhaps be seen better on a copy of Flaubert's "*Cœur Simple*," where a bronze morocco is inlaid with naturalistic





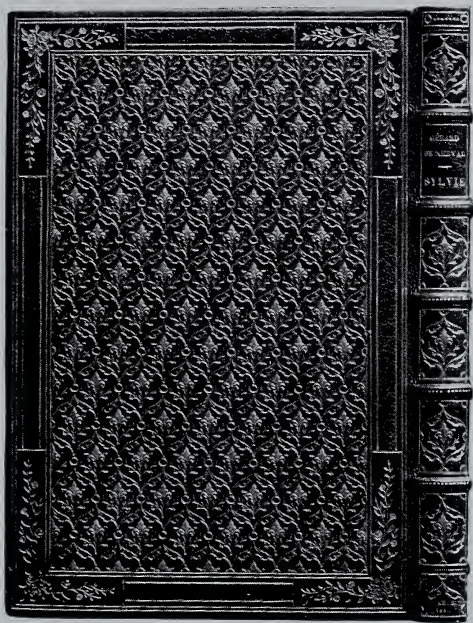
A BINDING BY RUBAN FOR FLAUBERT'S "UN CŒUR SIMPLE"



AN ELABORATE BINDING BY RUBAN



flowers of different colours modelled by hand in considerable relief and also without gold. Another style is found on a doublure of a



A BINDING BY RUBAN FOR GÉRARD DE NERVAL'S "SYLVIE"

binding of "Sylvie" by Gérard de Nerval. The outside is already figured in Bouchot's "De la Reliure," but the inside is given here as representative of a very attractive variation on the ordinary mosaic. The convol-



vulus flowers and leaves are stained and shaded by hand on a cream-coloured morocco ground and delicately outlined in gold. There is no



A DOUBLURE BY RUBAN

inlay, and the effect is excessively dainty, though slighter, and less emphasized than where different leathers are used. The cover is of the tan-coloured leather known as La

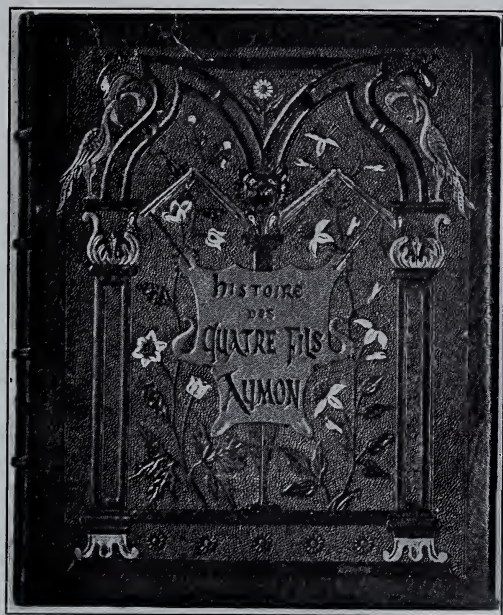
Vallière, inlaid with small flowers of a pale green, and has a design that, gilt three times, according to French custom in the best houses, took forty-five days to complete. M. Ruban is known for the care with which he suits his designs to the books they decorate, and even the accessories are studied in the same way, the brocaded silks that he employs as "ends" belonging to the period corresponding with the book. His work is well represented in M. Béraldi's book.

In connection with these bindings we may draw the attention of the reader to what seems to be an almost universal characteristic of the French in their application of floral motives to design. They are always what we should term naturalistic; the plant retains its natural growth, it is not conventionalized, that is to say, treated by means of repetition, alternation and symmetry. There is either a representation of the plant as it is in nature or else the Japanese arrangement of one or more elements isolated and casually introduced.

Marius Michel, in the pamphlet previously alluded to, expressly states that the plant-form should not be "stylisée," by which we presume he means conventionalized, but should be kept close to nature, though treated with simplicity. We know, too, that he has always made a special study of plants in the country with a view to keeping this closeness to nature in his employment of them for his own decorative work.

This is not the place to discuss the merits of this theory, but a constant observation of the decorative arts in France will force upon one's notice the fact that it is a theory of almost universal adoption over there.

Charles Meunier, who was born in 1866, was apprenticed to Marius Michel for a very short time, and at the age of twenty set up an atelier of his own. He threw himself at once into the new style of his era, the incised and coloured leather work, which marks the picture binding we have spoken of as characteristic of the younger French school for the last ten years. For a short



A BINDING BY RAPARLIER



SOME ECCENTRICITIES BY MEUNIER



time he confined himself very largely to half-bindings for the backs of which he invented emblematic decoration, and one example of his work shows him at this stage. In incised and modelled leather he has achieved great success, and several applications of this treatment were devoted to the "Trois fils d'Aymon." For this book, profusely illustrated by Grasset and brought out with all the luxury of print and paper that the publishers could command, Meunier has designed about forty covers. It was at first somewhat of a failure, being too high in price for the general public, and issued in too large an edition for the collectors of rare volumes. But Marius Michel took it in hand, and by dint of sumptuous binding managed to float it with success. From the curious character of the illustrations by Grasset, full of a strange blending of the art of many times and many countries, the book lent itself surprisingly to that emblematic type of binding then in full fashion, and to the new technique in its vari-



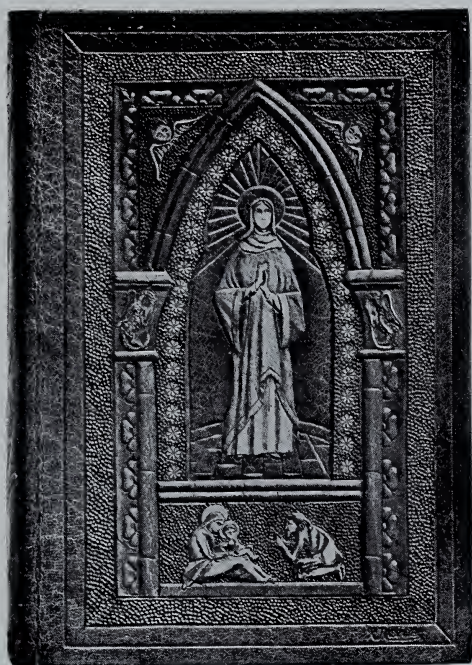
ous manifestations that carried into effect the symbolism of the designer. Marius Michel made many most successful experiments, and when he refused to go on designing afresh for the same book, Meunier was appealed to with the result above named. On this work there may be found the most typical and satisfactory instances of nineteenth-century binding, the majority being in the incised and coloured leather brought to such perfection by Marius Michel and by Meunier.

As in all the ateliers described, with the exception of those of MM. Gruel and Marius Michel, the personnel of the establishment does not consist of more than three or four workers, one of whom is a son of M. Cuzin and a promising "finisher." For such conditions to prevail as are found here and elsewhere in Paris, which include confidence on the part of the master, and leisure to work without pressure on the part of his subordinates, the workman must be worthy of his trust. "What saves France in her industries



SOME FRENCH BINDERS OF TO-DAY

at the present time," said one of the great binders, the other day, "is that her work-

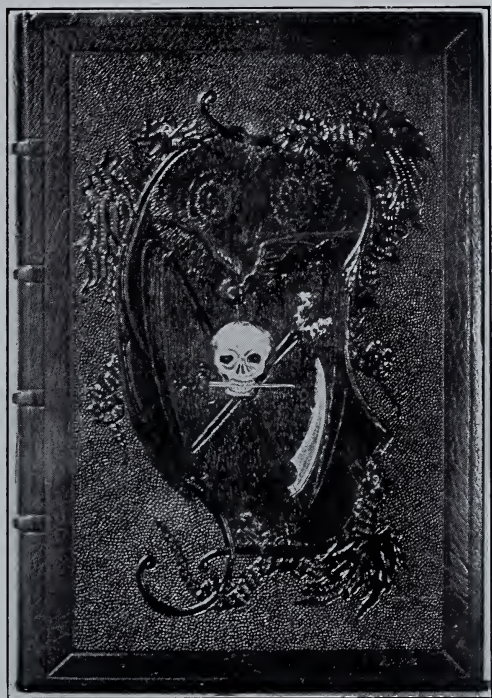


A BINDING BY RAPARLIER

men are still artists." And it is true, whether French taste in matters of art coincides with our own, or is often at variance with it, the fact remains, that the majority of French

workmen have the conscience, if not always the inspiration, of the artist.

Romain Raparlier was the most enthusiastic innovator and the boldest in his deviations from the traditions of the craft. "Le genre Raparlier" consists in representing on the cover of a volume some typical subject or scene in the book, by an entirely original process. The book, after being covered in morocco, has the design roughly modelled on it by means of small sculptor's tools made in metal instead of boxwood. These tools are heated, by which means the leather is slightly burnt and shadowed in greater or less degree. Inlays of other colours are then applied of various thicknesses, according to the relief required, and the modelling proceeds, the whole being kept very wet until it is sufficiently worked up. A certain amount of acid or colouring matter is added, if required, to give vigour to the design, which, when completed, is perfectly hard and can be subjected to the ordinary pressure. M. Raparlier was a pupil of the *École des Beaux*



AN EFFECT BY RAPARLIER

Arts, and only a thorough training in design and modelling could possibly give the ability for this sort of work, which is more allied to sculpture than to anything else one can think of. The designs on each side of the cover are always different and not one is ever repeated. The artist's exhibit at the Ex-

position Internationale du Livre in 1892, for which he obtained a gold medal, attracted much curious attention on account of its undoubted originality, and of the obvious artistic feeling shown in the harmony of colour displayed throughout. Born at Paris in 1857 he died prematurely in 1900. No doubt in time the bizarre and rococo would have appealed to him less if his clients had not continued to demand the "genre Raparlier" in its most extreme manifestations. His technique is both novel and interesting, and might with advantage be applied to a more restrained and classical style.

We have been dealing hitherto with binding of a special class—morocco work hand-tooled in all its variety—but it would not be fair to close this account of modern French binders without mentioning a type of binding which the French have made peculiarly their own, and which is now associated with the name of M. E. Carayon. This is known as "cartonnage à la Bradel." Supposed to be of German origin, it bears

SOME FRENCH BINDERS OF TO-DAY

the name of the binder who first adopted it in France. It has always been considered

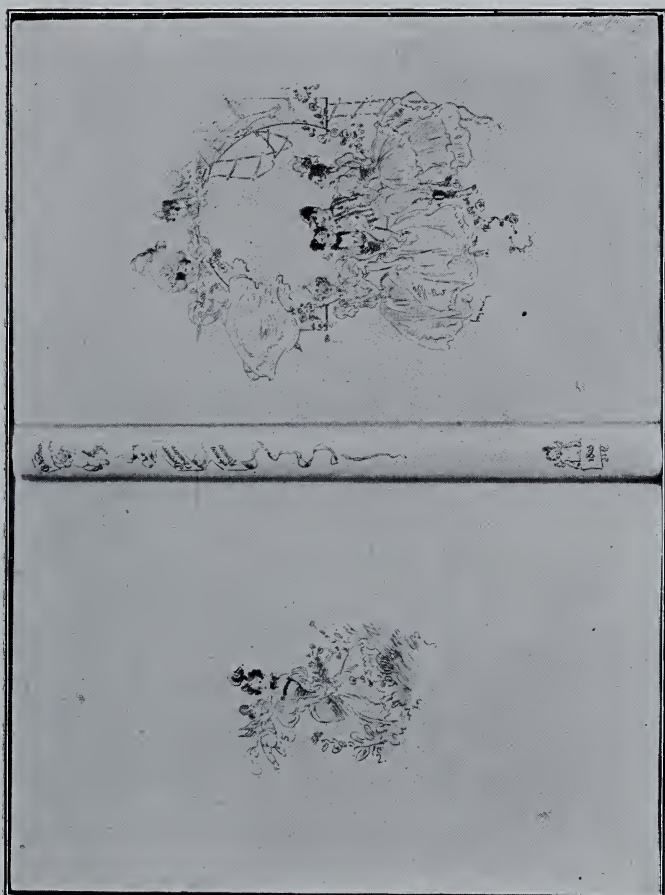


A BINDING BY RAPARLIER FOR "HERODIAS"

as binding of a purely provisional nature for books which it was proposed at some time or another to habit in a more costly man-



ner. The main features of such a binding are that the sections are not "sawn in" at the back and remain intact, being sewed upon ribbon, that the edges are left untouched by the plough, and that the boards of the book instead of being made one with the back and being fixed in the joint, are removed a certain distance from the back, leaving a hollow in which the covering of paper, silk or vellum is impressed. This hollow is peculiarly suited to vellum work on account of its stiffness, but not less to thin materials from the opposite reason that these are liable to give way at the hinge, when the board works sharply, as it does in the ordinary mode of binding. M. Carayon's work has, then, for its aim the preservation of the book, so that it loses none of its value on changing hands, and the purchaser gets it in exactly the same state as when it was first issued. It may be mentioned in passing that this is the only style which the French allow to open perfectly flat, the only really comfortable form of



A BINDING BY CARAYON





binding we get from them, but that is a natural idiosyncrasy which it seems that we must accept.

Carayon, born in 1843, started in life as a soldier, continued as a decorative painter, and chance having made him subsequently take to binding, he has ever since found consolation for chronic rheumatism, which completely disables him, in a love of books and a real passion for all the details of delicate and exquisite binding. The choice editions of M. Pelletan, a publisher who is perhaps more of an artist than any other in Paris, have provided plenty of material for the painted vellum covers which is one of the styles that Carayon has made and kept entirely his own. It is this style that we have chosen for reproduction, but unfortunately it is very difficult to reproduce from the extreme fineness of the line work and the equally delicate character of the colouring. Pen and ink sketches and water colour drawings have been made by well-known artists such as A. Robaudi, Louis

Morin, and Henriot on the vellum covers he has prepared for the purpose, and thus will go down to future generations as some of the most important book treasures of the time. He is the only binder who has succeeded in his treatment of vellum in keeping the spotless freshness which constitutes its chief charm. To the exhibition of bindings at Brussels he contributed not less than eighty volumes.

The nature of M. Carayon's work enables him to use all varieties of material that the most eccentric amateur can imagine; quaint, old-fashioned papers and cloths, silk brocades, snake and crocodile skins, Japanese leathers, with their striking colours and curious designs. These *reliures de fantaisie*, in whole or half bindings, are of endless diversity, and are carried out with great taste and with a delicate freshness of handling that finds no parallel elsewhere. M. Carayon does plenty of morocco work as well, gilt by skilful finishers, but even then it is always put through in the same way, the book left untouched

and the boards not laced in. His varied exhibit at the Exposition de Livre in 1892 gained for him a gold medal. Such work, it is needless to say, can be entrusted to but few hands and those carefully and leisurely trained to delicate manipulations, and the workman who has been the shortest time with M. Carayon has been helping him for more than fifteen years.

We cannot do better than quote his own explanation of his success, a success, it may be added, not sufficiently recognised outside his own country: "Le secret de mes succès, c'est tout simplement que je suis un amoureux du livre, que mon métier me plaît, et que je ne saurais à aucun prix massacrer un volume, fût il le plus infime."

It may seem to some a very trivial matter to observe the eternal warfare between the classics and the moderns carried out upon this miniature battlefield of the decoration of book covers. But it is really of interest not only to the book lover with whose special province it deals, but to the interested

## BOOKBINDERS AND THEIR CRAFT

observer of all progressive movements, for it is but another instance of an oft-repeated fact that no department of art or letters escapes that collision from time to time in its evolutionary development, and that from such shock of alternating principles vitality most surely ensues.

## EARLY STAMPED BINDINGS





## VI

### EARLY STAMPED BINDINGS



MAY as well state at the beginning of this paper that I have a distinct object in writing it. It is to call the attention of those who have under their control commercial or publishers' bindings to the way in which that class of work was decorated in the early days of books and bindings. In fact, I hold a brief on this occasion for the stamp or block, worked in a press and not by hand.

It is very much the fashion now a days to speak slightly of all work that is not done by the hand. The craftsman is in fashion, and to say that a thing is stamped is, to many persons, synonymous

with saying that it is inferior, and not worth the consideration of those who have taste and can distinguish good things from bad. The hand of the worker must, it is considered, be traced on all the details of his work, or else it is unworthy of notice.

Now I consider this to be a mistake. The hand of the craftsman is very well if it is also the hand of the artist, but it is far better, in my humble opinion, to have, as decoration for certain purposes, stamped work designed by an artist but mechanically produced, than to see the irregularities which are supposed, and often supposed rightly, to give value to hand work, when they are associated with decoration that is meanly conceived.

A few remarks may be acceptable by way of preparation for the study of the particular class of bindings dealt with in this paper.

We are occupied, then, to-day, with the second stage in the history of books and their makers, the stage of the gradual mul-

tiplication of manuscripts through the universities and the encouragement they gave to learning, and of the earliest printed books. The first stage is naturally that of the earlier manuscripts, when these were comparatively few in number and as far as binding is concerned, remained undecorated; unless, when containing the manuscripts of the Gospels or the service books of the church they were clothed sumptuously with all the art of the goldsmith and the jeweler.

Towards the end of the twelfth century the church was gradually ceasing to be the centre of enlightenment, and it is to the newly organised universities that we now turn for the control of the higher education and the diffusion of knowledge. The term *stationarii* first appears in Bologna in 1259, and it was their function to manifold and keep in stock a sufficient number of manuscripts authorized by the university and to hire them out to students. It is on these manuscripts that the earliest stamped bind-

ings are found. When the universities expanded, the custom gradually grew up of purchasing instead of hiring the texts, and the *stationarii* developed into *librarii*. They were under the strict censorship of the university, who fixed their commissions and controlled the circulation of their wares.

The first of the stamped bindings here illustrated prevailed from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries and disappeared shortly after the introduction of goldtooling. The earliest are of course on manuscripts, but the later ones are on what we should call in these days publishers' bindings and are on the early printed books.

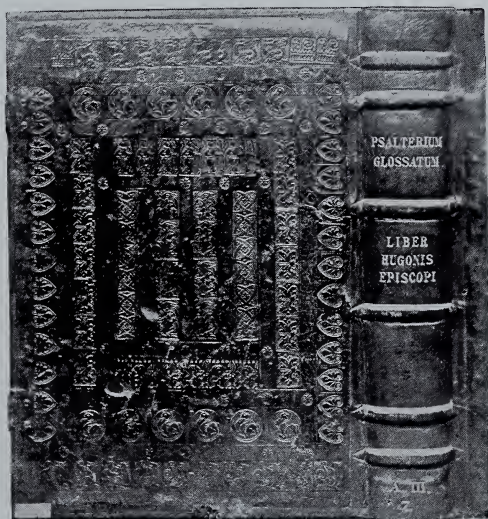
They do not belong to any one country in particular but are to be found everywhere except in Italy, whose ungilt bindings corresponding to that period were the "cable" or "rope-work" patterns of which I have spoken in another paper.

The earliest stamped bindings were without gold and are the earliest forms of ornamented leather covers. The decoration is

## EARLY STAMPED BINDINGS

composed of dies, in many instances of great beauty, and the earliest of all are of a very simple character.

Mr. W. H. James Weale, from his re-



DURHAM BINDING OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY

searches among the cathedral and conventual libraries of Europe, has elicited the fact that in the twelfth century England was at the head of all foreign nations as regards these bindings.

Winchester, London, Durham, Oxford

## BOOKBINDERS AND THEIR CRAFT

and York all produced stamped bindings of great merit. This, of course, is a very interesting point to us, who have to admit that, as regards gold-tooled bindings, Italy was at first preëminent and subsequently France.



DURHAM BINDING OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY

In the twelfth century, then, England had a distinct school of binding that even influenced foreign art, for the stamps on certain Durham manuscripts sent abroad were imitated there.



Durham, says Mr. E. Gordon Duff, was especially noteworthy for the style of binding, and there are still preserved in its cathedral library a series of books bound for Bishop Pudsey, toward the end of the twelfth century—perhaps the finest monuments of this class of work in existence. The sides of these book covers were tooled with a number of small stamps or dies of various shapes, cut in intaglio so as to leave an impression like a seal, the exact opposite of the procedure in gold tooling. These stamps, in themselves of much beauty and delicacy, were arranged formally but with great variety and a fine sense of effect.

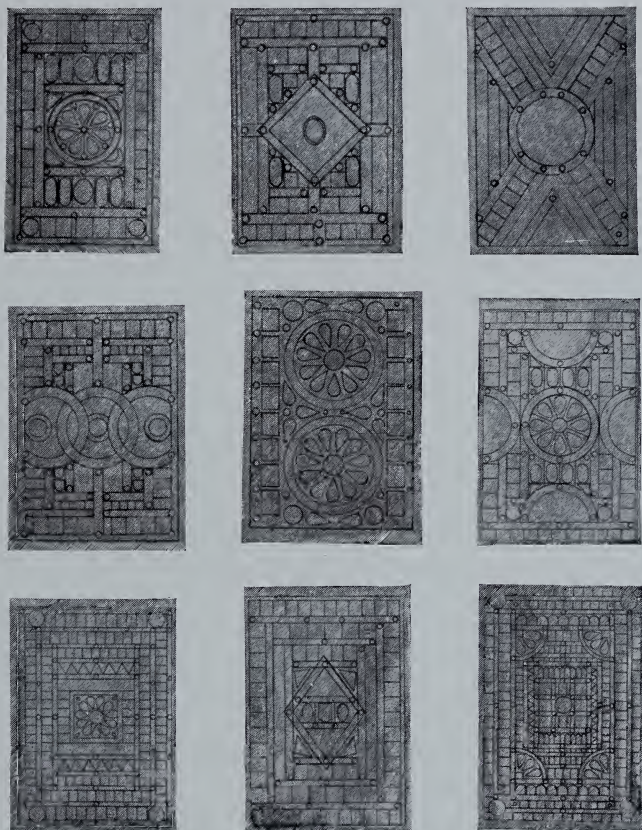
On the great Bible in four volumes which Bishop Pudsey had written and bound for him in the Benedictine house overlooking the Wear, no less than fifty-one dies are used, twenty-seven of which occur on the first volume alone. They represent men on horseback, birds, beasts and fishes and fabulous animals of many descriptions. Formal flower patterns are found as well,

and the interlaced chain work we mostly associate with early Venetian books. We do not know for certain how these dies were worked, but they were probably built up in a frame, and not impressed separately.

It is always difficult to get satisfactory reproductions of ungilt bindings, and the fact that these early books are much worn naturally increases the difficulty. The first two illustrations are from the Durham books just described. In all known examples of this early English work, an outer border of lines of stamps formed a parallelogram, the centre being filled either with other parallelograms or circles or segments of circles. This use of a circular ornament, says Mr. Duff, was so common that some of the dies were cut wider at the top than at the bottom, like the stones in the arch of a bridge, so that when fitted side by side they would form circles or parts of a circle, and in the same way many of the oblong dies were curved.

From the twelfth century onwards, there

## EARLY STAMPED BINDINGS



DIAGRAMS SHOWING ARRANGEMENT OF ORNAMENT ON THE DURHAM BOOKS

were, no doubt, professional binders other than monks, though there was no organized trade association of the kind in England till the beginning of the fifteenth century,

when there was in London a guild of text-writers—or limners, as they were called—and binders; and in 1422 the two crafts were enrolled as separate guilds. In Germany, France and the Netherlands trade guilds were far more highly organized, and it is to the Netherlands that we must turn for the chief further developments in this class of stamped bindings. For in England, after the Durham and Winchester work, there was little of importance done for some two centuries, owing to the degradation of the monasteries and the decline of scholastic literature.

The next development in the history of stamped bindings was initiated by the Netherlands. The invention of the panel stamp about the middle of the fourteenth century was an important one, for it enabled the side of a small book to be decorated at once. After the invention of printing in 1454 it became of almost universal application to the small books that came to be issued in increasing numbers. The strict-

ness of the Netherlandish trade guilds enabled the binder to protect both his trade mark and his designs—a privilege we may well envy in these days of unacknowledged pilfering.

Printing, after its first discovery, spread quickly over the whole of Europe, as the dates of the establishment of the various printing presses show. Beginning in Germany in 1454, it reached Italy in 1465, carried thither by Germans. It is to be found in Paris and the Low Countries about 1470, and in England a few years later, Caxton's Press being set up in 1477.

Thus the multiplication of books took place very rapidly, and with the increase in their number came certain very obvious and necessary modifications in their binding, which we may summarize thus:—

*Firstly.* It became no longer possible to give them costly coverings, such being reserved henceforth for devotional or other books of a special character.

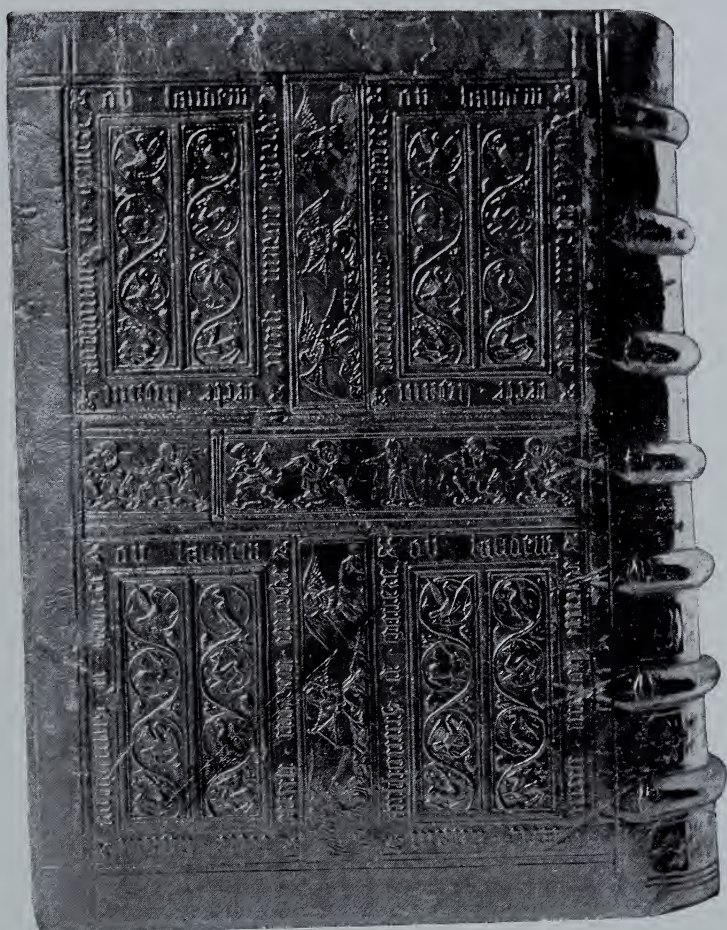
*Secondly.* It was necessary to produce bind-

ings more speedily, and after this period they fell naturally into two divisions — trade bindings and private bindings. For, while in the very earliest times of printing the printer was also a stationer and bookseller, and in the latter capacity bound his own books, the two trades naturally soon became distinct. The binding was then done entirely by the stationer-bookseller, to whom the printer supplied copies of his books in sheets. Thus trade bindings, between 1500 and 1550, become an important series, for the stationer-booksellers, besides binding specially for private collectors, issued a certain number of books in coverings of their own invention.

*Thirdly.* With the invention by Aldus of the smaller size of book, wooden boards were no longer essential, and Aldus, himself, was the first to disuse them. Boards made of paper or vellum pasted together under great pressure now took the place of wood.

With the introduction of printing, manuscripts ceased to retain their former value,





BINDING BY BOLLCAERT





## EARLY STAMPED BINDINGS

and many were ruthlessly destroyed to make the boards for the new bindings. The most valuable vellum sheets were used for the purpose, and by soaking these boards very important information concerning early manuscripts has since been discovered.

A little later, we find the same thing repeated with the cast-off sheets of the printer used in the same way to make boards for the binder, and thus, again, many valuable links in the chain of evidence concerning our early printers have been brought to light.

The panel stamp was developed in different ways according to the genius of the country that adopted it. In the Netherlands it is generally formal, and the accompanying illustration represents a very usual type. The spirals of foliage contain birds or beasts of a grotesque kind, and round the edge of the panel runs a motto or text with which is associated the name of the binder. In this way have come down to us the names of Ludovicus Bloc, Johannes Bollcaert, Joris

BOOKBINDERS AND THEIR CRAFT

de Gavere, Martinus Vulcanius, and others in such legends as the following:



PANEL STAMP OF THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST

“I, Ludovicus Bloc, bound this book honestly to the praise of Christ”; “Joris de Gavere bound me in Ghent; let all the

holy angels and archangels of God pray for us"; "Be diligent although you can look



PANEL STAMP OF ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON

at the art of Martinus Vulcanius." Our example is on a book by Johannes Bollcaert with the legend: "To the glory of Christ,



FRENCH PANEL STAMP

I, Johannes Bollcaert, honestly bound this book."

The pictorial panel stamp does not seem to have been in favor in the Netherlands so much as in France, but there are some specimens of extremely fine execution.

One in particular has the initials B. K. and on one side the Adoration of the Magi and on the other the Annunciation. Other Netherlandish panel stamps represent the entry into Jerusalem, the scourging of Christ, the baptism of Christ, and St. George and the Dragon.

In France pictorial stamps were of great variety and occasionally of great beauty. The best known are the acorn stamps of Jehan Norins, and two others by him representing the vision of the Emperor Augustus (*ara coeli*) and St. Bernard with a border containing the Sibyls, all signed either with initials or with his name in full. André Boule used panels of the Crucifixion and the martyrdom of St. Sebastian, the latter subject being used by many other binders as well.

The number of fine French panel stamps is very large and a most interesting illustrated monograph could be made on them and on the Netherlandish bindings of the same character. Unfortunately they do not



reproduce well in process work, for the relief is naturally much worn ; but when shown in a lantern they are far more effective than might be supposed.

The Norman binders of Rouen and Caën produced many stamps of English design, in consequence of the large number of service books that they doubtless bound as well as printed for the English market. The names have come down to us of Jean Moulin, who used panels of a strikingly decorative kind, some seven or eight of which are in existence containing a punning allusion to his name of "Miller," J. Richard, J. Huvin, R. Macé, who used, among others, a panel of the Annunciation, and Denis Roce, whose bindings contain figures of four saints ; the names of all these binders except the last are to be found upon the covers.

Among the many fine French stamps which well deserve a more exhaustive treatment than they have hitherto received, one stands out preëminent for beauty and a classic treatment of an oft-repeated motive.

## EARLY STAMPED BINDINGS

It is that of Alexandre Alyat, a Paris stationer of about 1500, who used a large



BINDING BY JEHAN NORINS

stamp with the figure of Christ and the emblems of the Passion. It may be seen on a book in the Aberdeen University Library. Stamps with this figure are

## BOOKBINDERS AND THEIR CRAFT

always known as the Image of Pity, and to my mind this example is quite the most beautiful of all that are extant.

It must, of course, be borne in mind that



PANEL OF THE IMAGE OF PITY

all these stamped bindings after the middle of the fifteenth century, were trade bindings, necessitated by the invention of printing and consequent multiplication of books.

In the earliest days after that invention, as has been mentioned the printer was sometimes a stationer and bookseller as well, and in that capacity bound his own books; very soon, however, the two trades became distinct and binding was done by the stationer alone.

Rich private collectors, however, continued to have their books bound especially for them; but the stamped work on printed books under present consideration was entirely upon trade bindings.

We must not omit to mention German ungilt bindings of this period of which there were two distinct styles, *i. e. cuir bouilli* and stamped work. Before the fifteenth century, the most noteworthy bindings produced by Germany were the hand-tooled leather ones; particularly those worked in a process called *cuir bouilli*, in which the leather was first cut with a knife and then raised in relief; later on the background was diapered down to cause the relief, but in the real *cuir bouilli* the

## BOOKBINDERS AND THEIR CRAFT

leather was always cut first. Nuremberg was especially celebrated for these wrought



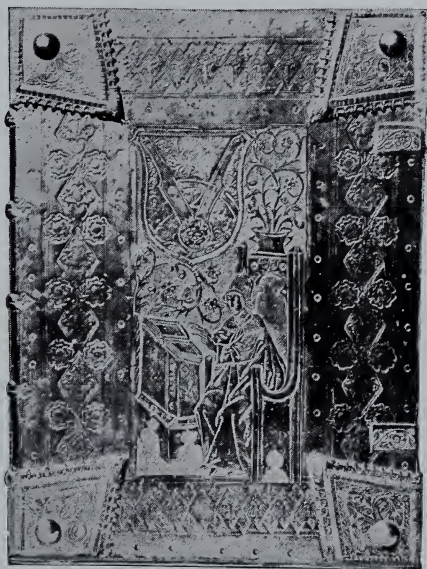
POSTILLA FRATRIS THOME DE AQUINO IN JOB. ESSLINGEN, 1474

leather bindings; many of which were of great artistic effect, and no two of which were exactly alike. Two examples of *cuir*



*bouilli*, a technique that has been much reproduced of late and particularly by M. Gruel of Paris, are given in illustration.

One is on a book printed at Esslingen in



RAINERIUS DE PISA, PANTHEOLOGIA. BASLE, 1475

1474. Mr. Weale states that the representations of animals on this binding are copied from those on the playing-cards engraved by the master E. S. of 1466. The other is on a *Pantheologia* by Rainerius de



Pisa, Basle, 1475, a most beautiful specimen of this cut work, and both are in the British Museum.

The first German stamped leather bindings after the fifteenth century generally had their ornament planned on a framework of intersecting vertical and horizontal bands, the field within being divided by ruled diagonal lines into lozenge-shaped compartments.

“Among the most important binders of Germany at this time,” says Mr. E. Gordon Duff, “is John Richenbach of Geislingen. His bindings—as a rule, of white pigskin—are dated from 1467 onwards, and bear full inscriptions of his name as binder, date of binding and very often the name of the person for whom the book was bound. Johannes Vogel used some delicate stamps, amongst them a curious half-length figure playing on a lute. He bound the copy of the Mazarin Bible now in Eton College Library, and also another copy of the same book sold at the Brayton Ives sale in New

York. Anthony Koburger of Nuremberg, one of the most important printers and stationers of the fifteenth century, bound his books in a very distinctive manner. He gave up the use of small dies and covered the side with a design made up of large tools." He also painted the title of the book in gold upon the top of the obverse cover. Unfortunately it is impossible to reproduce any of these pigskin books, for, yellow with age, they present no contrast whatever in photography.

We must pass on to the account of the panel stamp in England, to which likewise the previous remarks as to trade bindings apply. With the introduction of printing into England, there was a great influx of foreign craftsmen, so that the distinctive style of English work, which we saw in the earlier centuries on the Durham books, was destroyed.

From the Low Countries, the Rhenish towns, Normandy and Paris, there came a constant stream of printer-stationers, from

the reign of Richard III (1484) onwards. At first they paid only periodical visits to London, Oxford, Cambridge, York, and towns of importance, but seeing business prospects were good, they took up their abode in England. They even brought with them their stamps, and carried out their work according to the traditions of their own guild.

Books bound during the reign of Henry VII and the earlier part of Henry VIII are decorated according to the German, Netherlandish or Norman fashion. Many foreign stamps were bought and brought over after the death of their owner ; others were probably engraved abroad for the English market. Caxton when he returned to England from Bruges in 1476 and hired a shop in the Sanctuary at Westminster, no doubt brought his stamps with him, and used them in the style which he had learned abroad. His bindings, always of leather, were ruled with diagonal lines and the diamond-shaped compartments filled with stamps of dragons and

flowers, very similar to a stamp used by a contemporary binder at Bruges. Unfortunately very few of his books have come down to us in their original covers. Upon his death, 1495, these stamps passed to his successor Wynkyn de Worde, who used them till the beginning of the sixteenth century.

At Oxford only does there seem to have been any work of distinctively English character. At the early Press then under the direction of Theodore Rood of Cologne in partnership with Thomas Hunte an English stationer, we get the dies of foreign design and supplied possibly by Rood, combined after the manner of the Winchester and Durham bindings of the twelfth century.

In 1484 Richard III, who, while Duke of Gloucester had encouraged printing, provided that no statute should act as a hindrance for bringing into the country "any manner of books written or imprinted." This act further encouraged the influx of foreign printers and remained in force till

the twenty-fifth year of Henry VIII's reign, 1534, when it was repealed and another Act passed forbidding any but English subjects to sell bound books within the realm. The result of this was that a great many foreign craftsmen obtained letters of naturalization and remained in the country.

We cannot tell exactly when the panel stamp was introduced into England. The earliest known one is on a loose cover in the library of Westminster Abbey, and has the arms of Edward IV. It has no binder's stamp.

Frederic Egmond and Nicholas Lecompte, among the first stationer-book-sellers who came to England as early as 1493, had panel stamps of considerable interest. Lecompte's was an arabesque floral pattern of foreign design. Egmond's were two in number; a Tudor rose in the centre of a panel surrounded by vine leaves, and a copy of the printer's device of Philippe Pigouchet, of Paris, a wild man and woman standing on either side of a tree, and sup-

porting a shield bearing Egmond's mark and initials. The first named, *i. e.* the Tudor rose, was a favourite stamp of the time and used by Pynson (1493 to 1528) but Egmond's stamp is distinguished by an arabesque floral border bearing his initials and mark.

Only two specimens of Egmond's panels are known, one in Caius College, the other Corpus College, Cambridge. Both have on the reverse a panel containing three rows of arabesque and foliage surrounded by a border having ribbons in the upper and lower portions inscribed with the names of the four Evangelists.

In England the development of the panel stamp was mainly heraldic. Bindings containing the royal arms with supporters and different applications of the Tudor rose and other Tudor emblems are too well known to need reproduction.

Some ten binders appear to have used some form of these stamps from the number of the different initials found upon them.



One of these panels contained the royal arms supported by a greyhound and dragon—supporters discarded in 1528—the other a large Tudor rose supported by angels. Round the rose run two ribbons bearing the motto “*Haec rosa virtutis de coelo missa sereno eternum florens regia sceptram feret.*” The Durham Library has a book with the two stamps contained on one panel, and there are many different variations. The most important binders using these Tudor emblem stamps were John Reynes, Henry Jacobi and Julian Notary, whose bindings are always signed. Reynes had another stamp besides the above, very like a contemporary wood engraving in the Book of Hours printed by Thielman Kerver representing the instruments of the Passion arranged heraldically upon a shield with supporters and the inscription below “*Redemptoris mundi arma.*”

Although pictorial panels were not so largely used in England as abroad, the Annunciation in different forms was not infre-

## EARLY STAMPED BINDINGS



PANEL OF ST. NICHOLAS AND THE CHILDREN

quent, while St. George slaying the dragon and St. Michael and St. George, may also be found. The best specimens of this English work are now well pictured in the volume that appeared in 1895 on "English Bookbindings in the British Museum," by Mr. W. Y. Fletcher. The illustration given is from a binding by Nicholas Speryng, a Cambridge stationer, who, with a primary allusion to his Christian name had a design of St. Nicholas restoring to life the three pickled children.

## BOOKBINDERS AND THEIR CRAFT

Stamped work seems to have followed the apparently inevitable law of artistic fitness followed by subsequent degradation.



PANEL WITH THE INSTRUMENTS OF THE PASSION

Towards the end of the sixteenth century the blocks became poor and debased, the medallion heads on the panels used by Godfrey, Nicolas Singleton and others being

very typical of the complete disappearance of all that was vigorous and effective in the best days of the stamp.

We have now passed in review the different types of work stamped without gold, but, before concluding with a few practical remarks as to the essentials of a satisfactory stamp we must briefly mention the gilt stamped bindings, many of which were, in their way, entirely satisfactory.

Contemporaneous with Francis I and Grolier, for whose bindings he probably designed the letters, is Geoffroy Tory, who produced the most important stamped work in gold ever done by any stationer.

Born in 1485, he was educated in Italy and then set up at Paris as printer, bookseller and binder. The stationer-booksellers of France had issued many stamped bindings of considerable interest, but it was, no doubt, the influence of Italy that enabled Geoffroy Tory to achieve his remarkable results.

We have no time to do more than describe his bindings, but the woodcuts which

he drew for the books that he printed are well worth study. Indeed, the books that issued from his Press as regards printing, illustration and binding, are among the most interesting of a period in which the highest artistic qualities went to the making of books in all their detail. The stamps that he designed for his book covers are arabesque work, of which the Italian origin is very apparent. Our example is from a Petrarch in the British Museum, and it is a most graceful instance of pure Renaissance work.

In the lower part of the panel and forming part of the arabesques is to be seen the sign of the broken pitcher, or "pot cassé." This sign is first found in a woodcut at the end of a Latin poem published in 1523 on the death of his little daughter Agnes. In this woodcut the vase, pierced by a wimble or auger, stands chained upon a closed book. This wimble, called "toret" in French is probably a punning mark on his name, for it was always in the form of a T and was

## EARLY STAMPED BINDINGS



OPERE DEL PETRARCHA. VINEGIA, 1525

also used by engravers. The device designed, no doubt, in allusion to the death of his child, is explained by him in his book "Champfleury," a treatise on the proportion of ancient letters, in which the woodcuts are especially fine.



It is worth while to read this explanation in the original quaint and charming French, full as it is of the particular flavour of the Renaissance. We see the religious sentiment modified by the Greek mind as that appeared in the new learning, the associations of another world mingled with a kind of regretful consciousness of that new birth to things of the senses which the classic revival had brought about. These are characteristics that we find here and again in many of the Renaissance writers, and that give to the literature of that period its peculiar and subtle attraction. In plain English, his explanation of the sign is as follows: The broken pitcher is our body, which is a vessel of clay; the wimble is fate, which pierces alike both strong and weak; the book with three chains and locks signifies that after death our body is sealed by the three fates; the flowers in the pitcher are the virtue we possess in life. Geoffroy Tory's bindings are exceedingly scarce, but the Bibliothèque Nationale possesses three,

## EARLY STAMPED BINDINGS

one exceedingly fine, having the pitcher pierced by the wimble and two birds at the top among the scroll work.

For the most part, commercial binding



LYONNESE STAMPED BINDING, 1551

in the sixteenth century was a mere reproduction of the styles chosen by collectors for work done to their order. With the adoption of details made for execution by hand, but then united with mechanical regularity to the large plaque, the decadence of the stamp was practically assured.

## BOOKBINDERS AND THEIR CRAFT

But for the brief period during the last half of the sixteenth century, commercial work had a really independent artistic existence, and consequently, as far as gold



LYONNESE STAMPED BINDING, 1554

stamped bindings are concerned, was at its best. The Lyons work is the only work of its kind of which one can say that it contains a distinct feeling of what should differentiate stamped from hand work. Even here there is much that is unsuitable,

## EARLY STAMPED BINDINGS

but it is possible to select from among the quantity of the little Lyonnese books still in existence some really admirable specimens of block work, mainly stamped on calf.



LYONNESE STAMPED BINDING, 1575

Some of the Lyons binders used very fine stamps. We find those that show the azured corner and centre pieces which originated in Venice but were largely used in France; while others reproduce the painted interlaced work with or without the Venetian

## BOOKBINDERS AND THEIR CRAFT

flower tools we saw in the papers on Italian bindings. One can see how they copied the handwork patterns and yet often with such difference, as, in the best examples,



LYONNESE STAMPED BINDING

made those patterns more suitable to a stamp or block.

It is interesting to see how commercial work followed in the footsteps of artistic binding throughout successive periods, reproducing the best designs, and, later on, when

the art became decadent, also the worst. But we have not time to follow it further. The little Lyons printed volumes of the sixteenth century, mostly duodecimo, of which the examples given are from the library of the late Mr. Charles Elton, are those alone on which this commercial work had really independent artistic manner. They show that because a design is stamped from a block it need not be the less admirable, after its kind, than work that is hand-wrought.

We have now briefly glanced at the three main classes of stamped work as applied to bindings from the earliest time—*i. e.*, the Durham and English school, generally of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; the panel stamp formal, pictorial and heraldic of the Netherlandish, French and English schools of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; and the Lyonnese gilt stamps of the sixteenth century.

And it may be said at once that the first lesson we learn from their consideration is



that stamped work has its special laws as regards fitness and beauty of which the chief is that it should not attempt to reproduce the effect of the hand. Designing for block work is a thing apart: it is far more akin to the art of the medalist than to that of the mere designer, and it must be borne in mind that the impression received from a stamp should be obtained at one blow and not built up piece by piece according to the mental habit when grasping mere surface decoration.

A very curious binding was shown at the exhibition at the Burlington Fine Arts Club in 1891, evidently from a block, colour being introduced later. It has a bold design of caryatides supporting a framework. So far as I am aware, it is unique of its kind, and is here reproduced as full of interest to the designer of stamps.

It appears to me that the present decoration of publishers' bindings is upon wrong lines. The blocks are made to impress the cloth or leather in the strict sense

## EARLY STAMPED BINDINGS

of the term—not cut in intaglio, so as to give relief. So in most cloth work, not only are many of the designs made up



BINDING SHOWN AT THE BURLINGTON FINE ARTS CLUB

of small details, such as could be equally well carried out by the binder with his ordinary tools, but they are blocked flat, and have no relief whatever. As a result they only differ from hand-worked patterns by having a mechanical precision, which, in itself, is valueless.

## BOOKBINDERS AND THEIR CRAFT

I cannot but think that if some pattern-maker for book covers were to glean inspiration from a careful examination of the blocks on some of the old work above spoken of, he might arrive at a new departure as regards publishers' bindings. On such work a finely cut stamp, impressed without gold, would give more artistic and satisfying results than are to be found with the present gaudy system of flat blocking in gold and colour.

EARLY ITALIAN BINDINGS



## VII

### EARLY ITALIAN BINDINGS

#### I



SUPPOSE more has been written about the Italian Renaissance than about any other period of history, except, perhaps, that of Athens under Pericles. But each time one is brought face to face with it one is filled anew with fresh wonder at the perfection attained by all the arts at that time — a perfection as spontaneous and sudden as it was brief in duration.

The period of the best Italian bindings begins with the time that Aldus set up his Press at Venice in 1494 and ends with the middle of the sixteenth century. It was the



time then of the full Florentine Renaissance—of Michael Angelo, Perugino and Leonardo da Vinci in painting, of Benvenuto Cellini and his exquisite work in gold and silver, of Ghirlandajo, painter and jeweler at Florence, of Lucca della Robbia and his modelled terra-cotta, and all the majolica work that has never been equaled. All the crafts were, in fact, fine arts; it was their full flowering time, never to be repeated.

In going to any good museum with the mind full of these things, one sees enough to show that whether looking at architecture or painting, or at sculpture and carving, or at metal and goldsmith's work, or at pottery and cabinet-making, tapestry and armor, or at the printing and binding of books, it is all one—the full flower and fruit are there, as the world's history goes, of one hundred years at most.

It is not surprising, then, that at that time binding, too, was a living art and not a mere handicraft.

The impetus to books and their orna-

ments with which we are now concerned came with the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and the influx of Greek scholars into Italy that began the classic revival. The delight in beauty and the joy of living which is one of the characteristic notes of Hellenism, was as a trumpet-call to throw off the fetters to thought and feeling that had existed up to that time. For hitherto learning and civilization had centred in the life of the church. The seal of its approval or condemnation had been required in every department of life, until the revival of learning brought about a new standard.

Henceforth all was to be changed. The surroundings of life were to be adorned from the greatest to the smallest, and certainly the books which had thrown open a new world to an eager age were not least in the scale of importance.

The origin of the art of impressing leather with gold by means of hot tools worked upon gold leaf has not yet been traced. It is said to have been employed

in Syria as early as the thirteenth century. It was certainly brought from the East and may have been suggested by the ornament of the manuscripts carried into Italy after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. The actual technique may have been introduced at Venice by the Greek and Arab workmen when attracted there through commercial relations with the Levant and some of whom we know were employed by Aldus at his Press.

The earliest editions of the Greek and Latin classics were printed by Aldus in the italic type that he invented or rather that he is supposed to have taken from the handwriting of Petrarch and that is always associated with his name. It is on these volumes, the size of which (octavo) he originated as well as the type, that gold tooling in the proper sense of the term was first employed in Italy.

Many Eastern inventions were acquired by the Venetians in their traffic with the Levant, and this may have been one of them,

as was certainly the recessed and lacquered work employed on bindings during a short period.

In this the boards were made of, or coated with, some form of paper composition, that allowed the centres and corners to be stamped out in sunk panels or shaped compartments. The whole was then generally covered with a thinly-pared leather and this was next coated with a coloured lacquer and finally painted with arabesques in gold. Both in the British and South Kensington Museums in London you can see examples of this work, which is purely Italian and chiefly interesting from showing the influence of the East. They are often found with the lion of St. Mark painted on the centre panel, and when such is the case seem to have been employed as the official binding of the Statutes and Commissions of the Venetian Senate. A very fine example is given from a Harleian manuscript in the British Museum, though unfortunately the brilliancy of the red leather, coloured lacquer

## BOOKBINDERS AND THEIR CRAFT

and gold is lost in reproduction. The second example is also from the British Museum and can be seen in the show case



HARLEIAN MANUSCRIPT IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

there. The South Kensington Museum possesses a collection of stamps and tools used by Persian workmen in the production



## EARLY ITALIAN BINDINGS

of such bindings in more recent times and these show that each of the sunk panels was formed by the impression of a single die.



PICCOLOMINI DELLA INSTITUTIONE MORALE. VENETIA, 1560

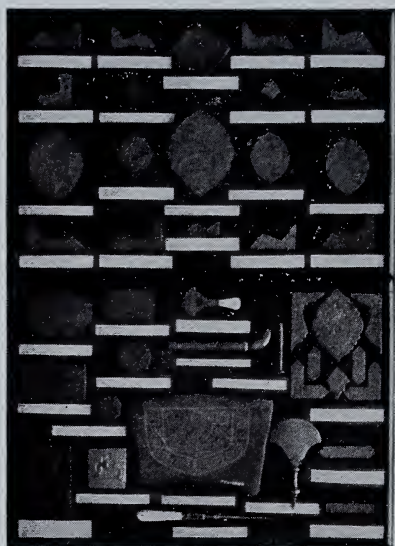
But Eastern influence may also be traced upon the Italian bindings during the last half of the fifteenth century, to which we



## BOOKBINDERS AND THEIR CRAFT

are about to direct attention in this paper and which are sometimes called Saracenic.

The designs on these bindings are largely made up of the cable work or rope pattern,

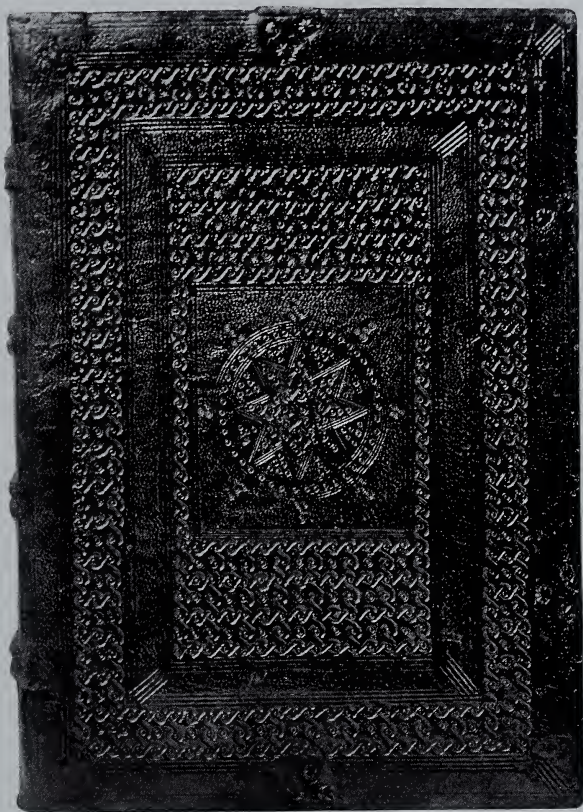


COLLECTION OF PERSIAN TOOLS IN SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM

as it is named, the term coming no doubt from the interlacings or reticulations being put together in imitation of the twist of a rope.

The knots are often made up into bor-

## EARLY ITALIAN BINDINGS



ARATI PHAENOMENA

ders between lines, the centre panel having them ingeniously contained in a circle.

In the earliest work of this type the "tooling" is "blind," that is to say, without

gold, and the spaces between the knots are filled with small roundels.

The first illustration is of this kind and represents a very well preserved book in the British Museum—*Arati Phaenomena*, a manuscript of the late fifteenth century. The little roundels just mentioned in these cable work designs were made of stamped thin metal discs sometimes of gold but more frequently of copper. The British Museum possesses several books with such traces, including the one here shown. Even when entirely blind-tooled, the knots and interlacements give great richness of effect, and the possibilities of combination they contain enable them to be applied to books of all sizes with equally satisfactory results.

The Burlington Fine Arts Club at their Exhibition in 1891, showed a considerable number of books with this type of binding, many of which are reproduced in their fine illustrated catalogue. A special feature of these bindings, apart from the design, is that in addition to the two clasps on the

fore edge, they had two others at top and bottom, traces of which you can see in the present illustration. The boards were of wood and frequently grooved down the edge, a peculiarity copied no doubt from the Greek manuscripts that came over after the fall of Constantinople. This habit of grooving the edges of the covers of Greek books continued well into the sixteenth century. It is to be found on many Aldine bindings and also on some made for Henri II of France.

These ungilt cable work designs have, to my mind, a great charm. On the one hand their absolute simplicity of motive and their skilful application of very few details are, in themselves, attractive ; while on the other we see them mostly disposed in the two main schemes of decoration that always seem to me to be most appropriate to book-cover decorations, namely, the border and the panel.

There is one not infrequent treatment of the panel in these books, a treatment that is,

perhaps, not confined to them, but is, at all events, especially distinctive of Italian bindings. It is the way in which the border of the panel, instead of being merely carried round, is repeated at the top and bottom, so that the superior length of the book in relation to its breadth, is duly emphasized, with a consequent considerable distinction in the design that it would not otherwise possess.

The next step in this class of reticulated patterns was the addition of gold, which then for the first time was employed technically in the manner of the present day. When used sparingly, as it was at first, it proved a very happy innovation. It gave great value, in an artistic sense, to the rest of the work, and blind and gold tooling were thus associated on some of the most attractive books of the first half of the sixteenth century.

The second illustration gives a simple example of this combination, and is in every way a type of binding frequently met with



## EARLY ITALIAN BINDINGS



HARLEIAN MANUSCRIPT IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

at this date. It is on a manuscript in the British Museum written in 1515.

Of the value of blind, in combination with gold, tooling, one can never be too ob-



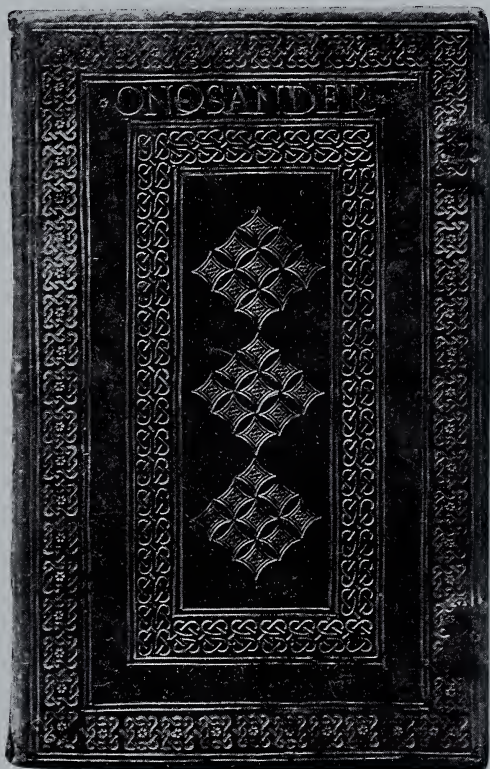
servant. We all know the decorative effect of a shadow. Sometimes by fire-light in a room, a very commonplace interior will have not only a sense of mystery but an actual contrast of form and colour, caused by the different parts of the different objects in it being delicately contrasted. Some measure of that effect is obtained by the darkened lines and impressions of blind-worked tools, which sometimes merely shadow the actual border, as in the present example, and at others are interwoven with the design.

A very rich example of the cable pattern carried out entirely in gold may be seen on a manuscript of Onosander belonging to the early sixteenth century, which was owned by Mr. William Morris and which I am permitted to reproduce here. Had the lettering been absent, or more in proportion to the design, it would be an entirely happy instance of the type of pattern known as "the border within the border."

All these bindings belong to the time when printing was about to make, or had

EARLY ITALIAN BINDINGS

just made, its appearance in Italy, and before passing to the next type of bindings,



MANUSCRIPT OF ONOSANDER. CABLE PATTERN, IN GOLD :  
OWNED BY MR. WILLIAM MORRIS

found on some of the earliest printed books, it may be well to emphasize for a mo-

ment the striking contrast presented between the book cover decoration we are now considering and that of the contemporary stamped work of England and other countries, to which I have devoted another paper. In that work we have the decorative block-stamp, of great beauty, certainly, and frequently of symbolic interest, but giving the decorative effect in solid mass, and, as it were, at one blow.

The influence of eastern art in Italy made for a different effect. In those early Italian bindings the total impression is got by a few simple elements skilfully arranged in combination and repetition. From this period dates the decoration of bindings by means of small tools, with lines and curves, such ornamental details being worked by hand and kept subservient to the effect of the whole, in a way never since surpassed.

We will pass now to the type of ornament found on Aldine books, and those of other printers who, like Giunta, of Flor-

EARLY ITALIAN BINDINGS



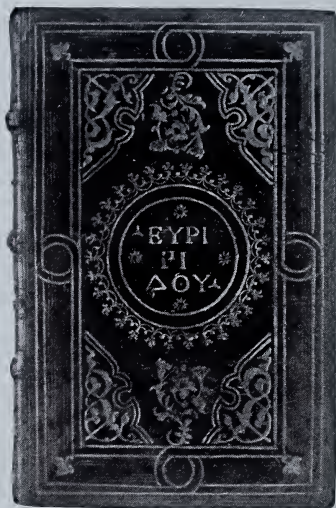
CÆSAR. COMMENTARIA, GIUNTA, 1514

ence, imitated the characteristics of the Aldine Press.

The British Museum possesses a Cæsar printed by Giunta in 1514 which is a most perfect specimen of this class. The border

## BOOKBINDERS AND THEIR CRAFT

is made up of an exceedingly graceful Aldine tool, which may be seen used in different forms for a long time to come; and the panel, which encloses some knotted



EURIPIDES. VENETIIS ALDUS, 1503

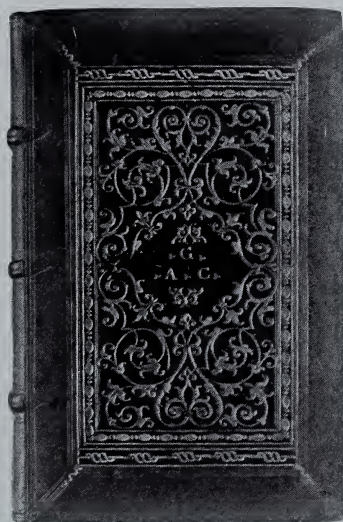
work, is accentuated at the top and bottom in the manner just referred to as essentially characteristic of Italian bindings.

An instance of more lavish ornament, but applied with equal simplicity and distinction, is on a Euripides printed by Aldus in 1503



## EARLY ITALIAN BINDINGS

belonging to the late Mr. Charles Elton, from whose collection all the illustrations of this type of binding are drawn. We see the leaves and the other solid ornaments



PONTANUS. VENETIIS ALDUS, 1509

that were used by Aldus in his printed page and which play an important part in the decoration of bindings for a century and more. It is an instance of the earliest style to be found on Aldine books which was richer and more elaborate than the middle



## BOOKBINDERS AND THEIR CRAFT

style in which the pattern is almost severely restrained, having for the most part merely a panel of simple gold and blind lines with solid ornaments at the angles.



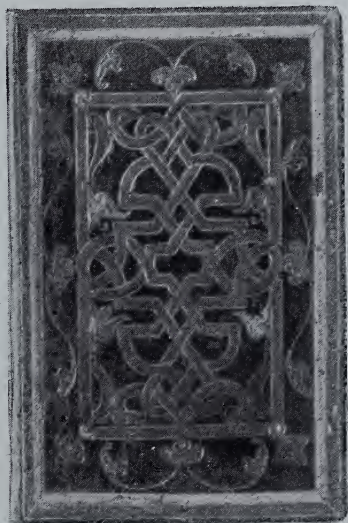
LIVII HISTORIA. VENETIIS ALDUS, 1520

Another illustration from a Pontanus printed by Aldus in 1509, will be sufficient to emphasize this earlier Aldine style. Here we have a very rich panel, full of luxuriant scroll work, mingled with the same solid

#### EARLY ITALIAN BINDINGS

tools as in the last, and its effect is greatly enhanced by the border of plain leather.

Another example is from a Livy printed in 1520, likewise by Aldus. Within a gold



BOCCACCIO. AMOROSA VISIONE VINEGIA, 1531

border on the upper cover is the title T. L. Decas IIII., on the lower, the figure of Fortune holding out a sail with the initials I. S. in gold. Such a figure is often found on early Venetian bindings. The last

illustration is on a Boccaccio of later date. There is a freshness and lack of effort about this and other samples of the same type, that strike one as perhaps the happiest characteristic of that which is altogether entirely admirable.

We have seen enough, perhaps, now to make us to form an opinion as to the lessons to be drawn from the examples of early Italian binding. They are, I think, will be agreed, mainly these :—

*Firstly*, a constant sense of the shape and proportions of the thing to be decorated, seen in the insistence on the border and the panel as schemes of design.

*Secondly*, an equally fine sense of the value given to ornament, by the unornamented parts or untouched spaces of leather.

*Thirdly*, restraint in the matter of decorative detail so that it is always kept in due subordination to the effect of the whole.

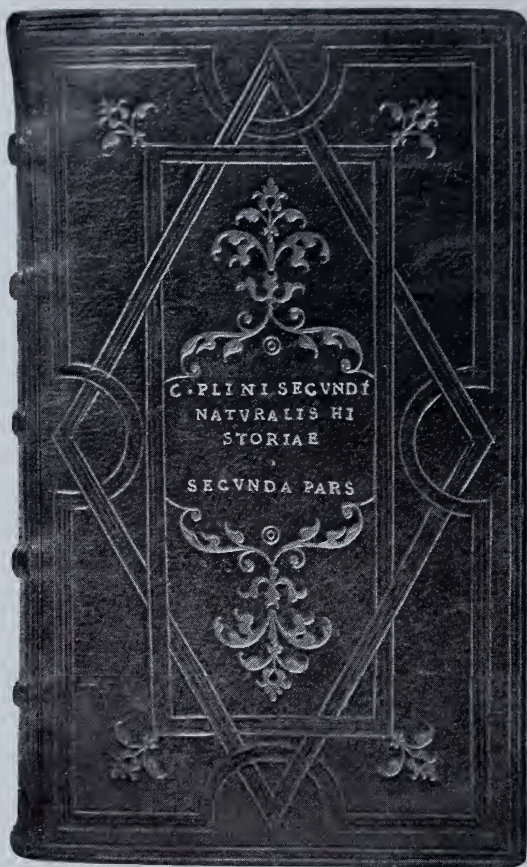
These early craftsmen knew full well that in matters of art, richness of effect is got not by the multiplication of rich detail but

by the effective contrast of such detail with a severe simplicity.

## II

We have no information as to the arrangements made by Aldus for the binding of the books he printed. Possibly he had a binder's shop in connection with his Press. Certain it is that not only his type but also his binding were imitated by Filippo da Giunta, the Florentine printer. So that in speaking of Aldine styles it must be borne in mind that they are to be found not exclusively on the books printed by Aldus, though they of course originated there. All the finest early Italian bindings may, indeed, be illustrated from the Aldine books, among which there are three different styles. In the preceding paper we have described the earliest, which belongs to the close of the fifteenth and early part of the sixteenth century, and which was richer than the second or middle style, possibly on account of the freshness of the discovery of the effect pro-

BOOKBINDERS AND THEIR CRAFT

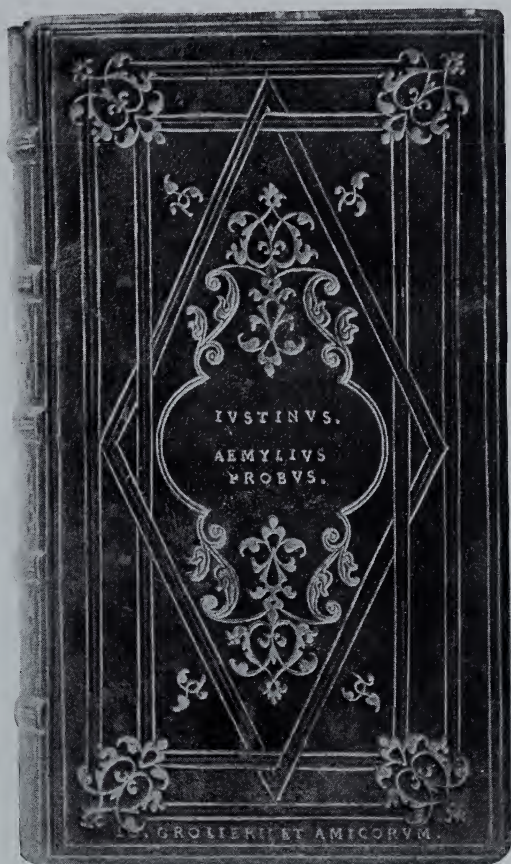


PLINII SECUNDI HISTORIA NATURALIS. VENETIIS, ALDUS, 1535

duced by gold tooling. About 1520 we meet with the second style, in which, instead of enriched borders, we get the panels al-



EARLY ITALIAN BINDINGS



TROI POMPEII EXTERNÆ HISTORIÆ IN COMPENDIUM AB  
JUSTINO REDACTÆ. VENETIIS, 1522

ready mentioned of simple gold and blind lines with solid ornaments at the angles; the fore-edge of the boards has strings or clasps,



BOOKBINDERS AND THEIR CRAFT



GRATIUS. HOC VOLUMINE CONTINENTUR POETAE TRES, ETC.  
VENETIIS, 1534

and if a folio there is an additional clasp at top and bottom. We are able to illustrate this style from the books bound for Grolier in

EARLY ITALIAN BINDINGS



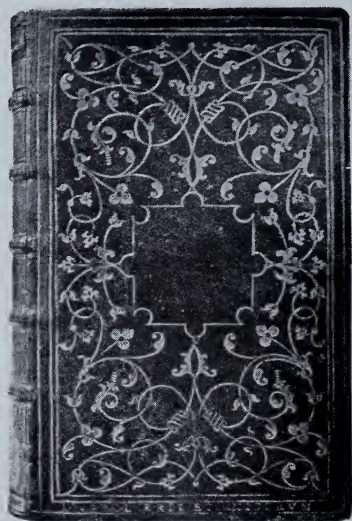
B. THEODORETI IN S. PAULI EPISTOLAS COMMENTARIUS.  
FLORENTIÆ, 1552

the British Museum. On the Aldine Euripides we saw the beginning of the framework, the geometrical character of which is grad-

## BOOKBINDERS AND THEIR CRAFT

ually developed in this middle style, the flowered tools being always solid and of the same type as those we saw before.

The third style consists of the more elab-

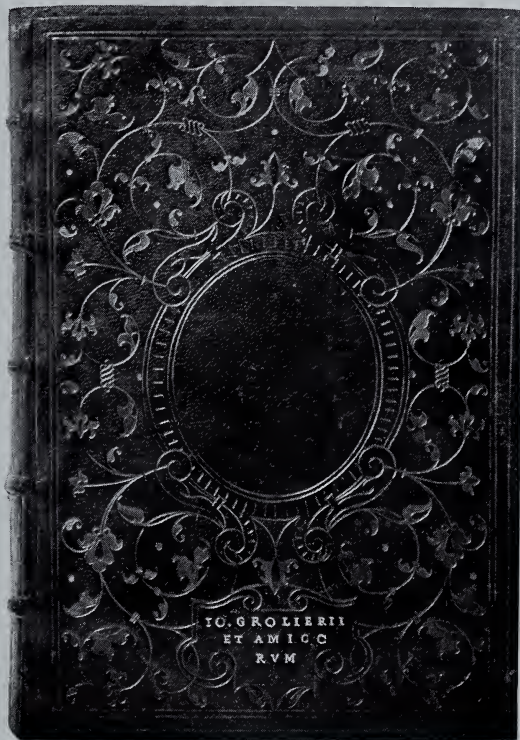


ERIZZO. DISCORSO SOPRA LE MEDAGLIE ANTICHE  
VENETIIS, 1559

orate interlaced patterns with which the name of Grolier is particularly associated. Here we get the geometrical basis in its most rigid form, sometimes diversified with the addition of the Aldine ornaments or with Arabesque work, sometimes complet-

EARLY ITALIAN BINDINGS

ing the design in itself. In very rare instances we get a design made up entirely of



ÆNEÆ. VICI IN VETERA IMPERATORUM ROMANORUM NUMISMATA  
COMMENTARII. VENETIIS, 1560

most graceful scroll work like that of the “Erizzo. Discorso sopra le medaglie antiche,” pictured in M. Bouchot’s “Reliures d’art



à la bibliothèque nationale," and of a binding in the British Museum illustrated next. These are generally considered to belong to the work executed for Grolier in France. We get also a type specially Italian in character, full of scroll work with the Venetian flower tools we already know so well. Sometimes the interlacings of the framework are painted in different colours by means of a lacquer, giving the effect of inlay, though the actual inlaying or onlaying of different leathers only began much later.

As we have drawn our illustrations from the bindings of the Aldine Press, and especially from books in the famous library of the great collector Jean Grolier, a few words as to his life and relations with Aldus may not be amiss in this connection.

His life belongs to the history of France, but his bindings chiefly to Italy and the Aldine Press. The later work done for him was, no doubt, executed in France, and so his bindings might, in that sense, be treated of amongst French bindings. It seems, how-

ever, more proper to discuss them mainly as Italian; firstly, because their inception, as a whole, was entirely Italian and the execution of a large number undoubtedly by Italian workmen; and secondly, because it is possible that those bound after his return to France, and which show a certain refinement upon the earlier manner, in the use of lighter tools, may have been done, also, by Italian workmen, retained by him in his house, to carry out instructions according to his personal taste.

Grolier is so interesting a figure among the princely scholars of an age when scholarship was still an unworn grace, that it is difficult not to linger over his career and the encouragement he gave to all the artists and men of letters of his time. We cannot, however, do more now than show briefly how he came to be so intimately connected with the Italian Renaissance.

Born in Lyons in 1479, of a family that originally came from Verona, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, he replaced



his father, in 1510, as Treasurer of the Duchy of Milan, a province conquered by Louis XII, and it was, probably, about that time that he made the acquaintance of Aldus. Milan subsequently revolted but was re-united to France by François I on his accession, and in 1534, Grolier was sent by François I as Ambassador to Clement VII. He could not have remained either at the Court of Rome or as Treasurer of Milan later than 1530, as about that time the French troops left Italy and amicable relations ceased between France and the Pope. His relations with Italy thus lasted for a period of twenty years. In 1537 he had returned to Paris and was employed in the Treasury there. And in 1547 he was made Treasurer General of France, a position he held until his death in 1565.

Towards the end of his life he fell under serious accusations relative to the discharge of his public duties, but in 1561 a court, presided over by Christophe de Thou, father of the great collector of that name,

and a friend of Grolier, annulled the legal process against him. He appears nevertheless always to have had the confidence of the king and to have kept his various positions in the royal service.

Such is a brief account of the outward events of his life. As Treasurer of France, he had among the many duties that fell to that office the care of the palaces, chateaux and domains belonging to the crown. Thus he helped to establish the College de France under François I and superintended many architectural works like that of the Palace of Chantilly. He invented a new coinage under Henri II, helped thereto, no doubt, by his own knowledge of antique medals. Of these he had made an extensive collection on his travels, a collection subsequently bought by Charles IX and placed at Fontainebleau, whence it seems to have been pillaged during the wars of the Holy League in 1576. Grolier's house, the Hôtel de Lyon, near the Bucy Gate, in Paris, contained his library, composed of 3,000 vol-

umes of classical and Italian authors, no doubt acquired mostly in Italy. Of these about 350 have been traced. After his death they were divided among his inheritors and subsequently found their way into the chief private collections of France.

In the discharge of his duties as Treasurer of the French army in Italy, Grolier sometimes lived at Naples, but mostly in Milan, whence he made frequent visits to Venice. Aldus died in 1515, leaving four children, but all too young to direct the printing establishment he had founded. Fortunately its management was undertaken by his father-in-law, Andréa Torresano d'Asola and his two sons. At that time Grolier's relations with the house were most intimate, and in a letter to Francesco d'Asola, in 1519, concerning a treatise by his friend Budé, the foremost Greek scholar of the time, upon ancient measures and moneys, "De Asse," which he was having printed, he writes thus: "This man's death has caused me a very bitter sorrow, as much be-

cause learning has lost in him a very able restorer as that I have been deprived of a most affectionate friend;" and in the same letter he makes remarks about the type, paper and margin that he wanted for the book mentioned, that show of how serviceable a kind was his patronage of the press. The catalogues of his library incidentally show the encouragement he gave to printing, for more than one-third of the books named in it are the production of the Aldine Press. Indeed, the indebtedness of Aldus and his family to their patron is fully acknowledged in an edition of Terence, published at Venice in 1517, which contains a Latin letter of dedication to Grolier, signed by the same Francesco d'Asola, brother-in-law of the elder Aldus. There are other dedications to him of a somewhat similar kind, and whenever they published a book, several copies were set aside for him printed either on vellum or on special paper.

Virgil appears to have been his favourite author; he owned at one time ten copies of

his works, including a very beautiful manuscript and the earliest printed edition of 1486. Of the Aldine Virgil, printed in eighths, in 1527, he had five copies, three of which he afterwards presented to friends as his habit was. To Marc Laurin, Maioli, the president de Thou, he made presents of books, as may be seen from the inscriptions in them. Geoffroy Tory, the French printer, who designed some of the letters for his bindings, Pithou and Claude du Puy had similar gifts, and the custom of having several copies of the same book may possibly be thus explained. On nearly all Grolier's books the pattern is so arranged as to leave in the centre an open shield or lozenge. On the upper cover, within the lozenge occurs the title, on the lower there is one of various legends. Sometimes it is "Portio mea domine sit in terra viventium" adapted from the fifth verse of the 142nd Psalm, on others, "Tanquam ventus est vita mea" from the seventh verse of the seventh chapter of Job, "Custodit dominus omnes

diligentes se, et omnes impios disperdet," the twentieth verse of the 145th Psalm, and "Quisque suos patimur manes" from the 743rd line of the sixth book of the *Æneid*.

Another motto, "*Æque difficulter*," is also occasionally found and may be translated "the golden mean is hard." This occurs only on his earlier bindings, and is accompanied by the device of a hand coming out of a cloud and striving to pull an iron bar from the ground, possibly referring to some special event of his life. Sometimes his arms—az. three besants or in point, with three stars arg. in chief—are stamped on the covers either singly or emblazoned with those of his wife Anne Briçonnet.

The inscription on his bindings, IO. GROLIERII ET AMICORUM, showing that his books were intended for the use of his scholar friends as well as himself, has been a feature in his Library that has always interested modern book-lovers. A similar motto is, however, to be found on the books of two other contemporary collectors,



Maioli and Laurin, of whom I shall presently speak. This shows, perhaps, that Grolier's generous notion of a Library was not uncommon in those days; or, it is possible, of course, that they may have acted merely in direct imitation of his habit.

Grolier is a most striking example of the fact that it is possible for book-collecting to assure a man's title to fame, more than any other occupation of his life. For though he filled posts of the very highest importance as statesman and financier, though as scholar and antiquarian he lived through the reigns of seven kings of France, from Louis XI to Charles IX, his name would have been forgotten, but for the books which have come down to the present day as witnesses of his taste in all the departments of letters.

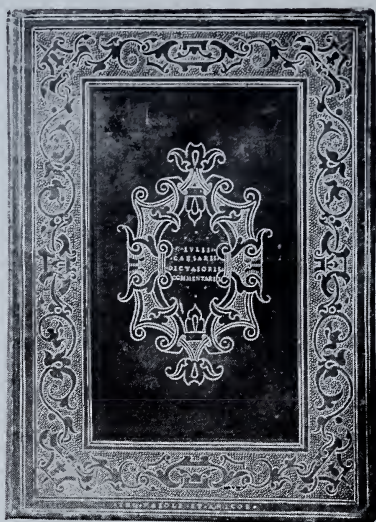
Next in importance to the bindings of Grolier are those of Maioli. Tommaso Maioli was an Italian book-lover, contemporary with Grolier, of whom nothing is known except that he was still living in 1555 and

that he enjoyed the friendship of Grolier. In the Lyons Public Library are two books stamped with the name and motto of Maioli, in which Grolier has written his name and motto. The books that remain to us from his collection are few in number, compared with those that we have of Grolier, but the Bibliothèque Nationale has nine fine specimens and there they may best be studied.

The designs on the bindings of both collectors are very similar in character, but those done for Maioli are distinctly more florid. Those in the French collection are distinguished for their flowing scroll-work, the curves of which interlace freely with the framework ; the whole character of the ornament is less architectural and more free.

I am afraid, however, that the appropriateness of these distinctions is difficult to see on the two examples of Maioli books here given, for they are hardly typical of the free scroll-work just described as distinguishing his bindings. They are both in the British Museum. The first is on a copy of

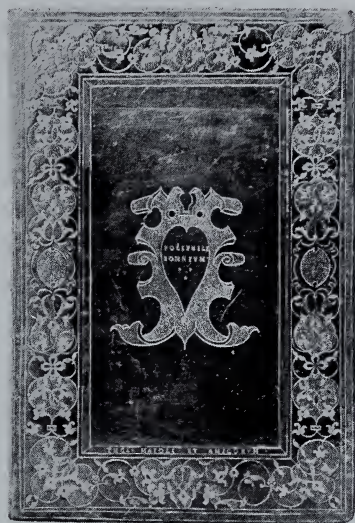
## BOOKBINDERS AND THEIR CRAFT



C. JULII CÆSARIS COMMENTARII. ROME, 1469

Cæsar's Commentaries; the second on that unsurpassed example of early Italian printing, the *Hypnerotomachia* of Francis Columna, printed in 1499. Ornamented throughout with the most beautiful woodcuts, that book will always remain distinctive of the Renaissance and the most superb example of the Venetian Press. On both these bindings one can see certain other differences that distinguish them from Gro-

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HYPNEROTOMACHIA POLIPHILI. VENETIIS, 1499

lier's. First, the frequent enrichment of the field by dots—an extremely effective innovation and very rarely found on Grolier's books. Second, the flowered tools which are mingled with the scroll-work, instead of being solid, are now almost entirely in outline, or else azured. It is only on one or two of Grolier's books that the solid tools are not found, while they are the exception on those of Maioli. One sees that Maioli

followed the tradition of his time in having a possessive motto stamped on his books, which were evidently, like those of Grolier, accessible to his friends. On the upper cover is generally to be found the inscription, THO. [or THOMÆ] MAIOLI ET AMICORUM; and on the lower cover: INGRATIS SERVIRE NEPHAS (It is useless to help the ungrateful); or the less obvious latin legend: INIMICI MEI MEA MICHI NON ME MICHI, of which no satisfactory explanation has ever been found, but of which a suggested translation runs: Mine enemies are able to take mine from me, not me from myself (Pos-sint inimici mei mea eripere, non me mihi).

There is also a cypher found on some Maioli books, that has likewise never been satisfactorily interpreted AEHILMOPST, out of which his name can be formed, but on so doing leaves other letters still unaccounted for.

One peculiarity to be found on some books bound for him, is, so far as I know, not

to be seen elsewhere. This consists in some form of gold rubbed into the grain of the leather, leaving an effect of bloom or fine dust that is very pleasing. The Bibliothèque Nationale has a very fine binding of this nature, and there is a rather poor one in the British Museum, but not on view.

Though most Maioli books are richly ornamented, there are some simple ones with a plain border and the name in a cartouche or tablet. Of such is a well-known example in the possession of Mr. Huth, and figured in the Catalogue of the Burlington Fine Arts Club.

There is only one other foreign collector who, like Grolier and Maioli, used the motto placing his library at the disposition of his friends. This is Marc Laurin of Vattervliet, near Bruges. Little is known of him except that he came of an illustrious family, was a scholar and antiquary, the friend of Erasmus, and that he succeeded Hubert Goltzius in a work of four volumes, published at Bruges between 1563 and 1576, on the



illustrations of Greek and Roman history afforded by the medals of antiquity.

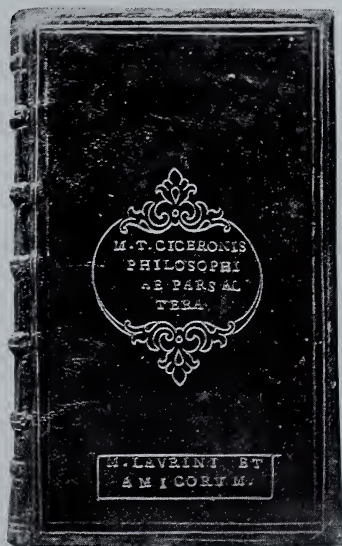
The bindings bearing his name and motto are very rare. There are four in the Bibliothèque Nationale, all very plain—three in black leather and one in brown. They mostly have the motto: LAURINI ET AMICORUM in a cartouche on the upper cover, and the motto: VIRTUS IN ARDUO (courage in difficulty) on the lower, also in a cartouche. The one here given was exhibited in the Burlington Fine Arts Club in 1891.

From the decorative point of view, it is chiefly instructive as showing the distinction that may be got from a few elements skilfully combined. In England Thomas Wotton, father of Sir Henry Wotton, had many books bound with a like motto.

Among the most beautiful Italian bindings of the first half of the sixteenth century, are those known as cameo bindings. The impressions in relief were obtained from dies cut in intaglio. The material of the

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cameos consists of vellum, pressed damp upon the die, the cavities being filled with some sort of composition to preserve the



CICERO. DE NATURA DEORUM. VENETIIS, 1523

shape of the figures. After being transferred to the centre of the leather binding, they were sometimes, in the richer examples, gilt and painted.

The first example shown here is on the "Enchiridium Grammatices" of Eufrosino

## BOOKBINDERS AND THEIR CRAFT

Bonini, a book printed at Florence in 1514. The cameo in high relief of Julius Cæsar is sunk into the boards, which are of



ANTHOLOGIA GRÆCA. FLORENTIÆ, 1494

wood. In this way the projecting surfaces of the cameo are spared any friction, and it is still almost as fresh as the day it was done. The whole book is blind-tooled. The next is on a Greek Anthology, a first edition on vellum, printed throughout in

EARLY ITALIAN BINDINGS



BONINI. ENCHIRIDIUM GRAMMATICES. FIRENZE, 1514

capital letters by Laurentius Franciscus de Alopa at Florence in 1494. The border leaves and circle are in gold, the rest is

blind work and the cameo head is that of Alexander. The other side has a similar head of Philip.

Probably the finest specimen of a cameo binding is to be seen on a copy of *De Medicina* of Celsus, which, like both those above described, is in the British Museum, printed by Filippo Pinzi at Venice in 1497, and, later on, the property of Grolier. It is covered in olive brown morocco. The upper cover has an embossed medallion of Curtius leaping into the abyss of the Forum at Rome, and the lower cover another medallion of Horatius Cocles defending the Sublian Bridge against the Etruscan army under Lars Porsena.

In both these cameos, the modelling of the figures is exquisite, and the elaboration of detail in that on the lower cover extraordinary for its size. Each medallion has a green margin and is set in a panel. The intervening spaces between the cameo and the panel are filled with graceful decoration of a corded or ribband pattern, impressed

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CELSUS. DE MEDICINA. VENETIIS, 1497

in blind and painted blue, in which are introduced rings washed with gold, and red and gold roundlets. This panel is surrounded by a three-fold border of blind-tooling, which extends to the edge of the boards; and the whole, apart from the special feature of the medallion, is a perfect example of that simple but effective form of decoration especially suited to book shapes—the double border.



Mr. W. Y. Fletcher, for many years Assistant Keeper of the Printed Books in the British Museum, has given much consideration to this binding, and the result of his researches shows the sort of work that is still to be done in connection with Bindings, and how such work may open out problems of a wider character. ("Bibliographica," Vol. I.) He tells us that the moulds from which the medallions on the Celsus book were made were cut in the first instance for the purpose of casting plaques for the ornamentation of sword panels; and a bronze plaque representing Curtius leaping into the abyss, evidently produced from the same matrix as the medallion on this binding, is shown in the department of British and Mediæval Antiquities in the British Museum. A similar one of Horatius defending the bridge is preserved in the Museum at Berlin. These plaques were designed and executed by Giovanni, called Giovanni delle Corniole, or Giovanni of the Cornelians, from his skill in cutting stones. He was

born at Pisa about 1470, but lived the greater part of his life at Florence, where he is believed to have died in 1516. In this discovery, we have another instance of that interdependence of the arts that is always so interesting to observe, and of which we see many instances in the history of binding.

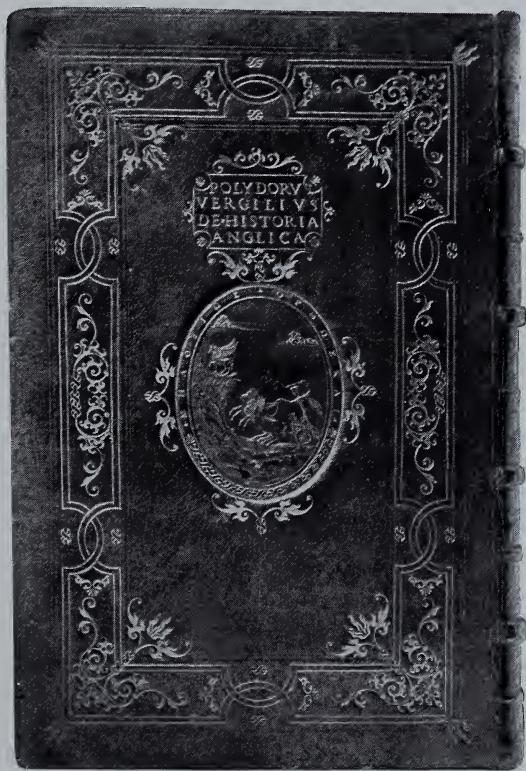
Perhaps the best known cameo bindings are those associated with the name of Demetrio Canevari, Physician to Pope Urban VIII. He must have inherited the library of books bound in this way, for they were bound in Venice between 1540 and 1560, whilst he was not born until 1559. They remained intact in the Vico Lucoli at Genoa until the year 1823. They are easily recognised by their fine central oval stamp of Apollo driving his two-horsed chariot over the waves towards a rock on which is Pegasus. The medallion is surrounded by the Greek motto: *ΟΡΘΩΣ ΚΑΙ ΜΗ ΔΟΞΙΩΣ* (Straightforward and not obliquely.) This motto, like so many others on bindings, is

something of an enigma. It was probably a reference to one of the epithets of Apollo, who was sometimes called Apolloloxias, from his intricate and ambiguous oracles. The dies from which the cameo is stamped vary with the size of the book, and the cameos are mostly painted in green, silver and gold. The Canevari books are fairly numerous and very elaborate examples are to be found amongst them. The oval stamp is often set in the interlaced and flowered work found on Aldine bindings, with the solid Venetian tools. Our example is a copy of the "*Historia Anglica*" of Polydore Vergil, printed at Basle in 1534, and now in the British Museum.

It must always seem a strange fact that Italy, though the originator of artistic bindings, had never any permanent school. To her we owe both the introduction of gold tooling into Europe and the inspiration in ornament as applied to the decoration of books that determined the designs used in France for more than a century after and

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that filtered through France into England for a still longer period. Nevertheless Italian



POLYDORI VERGILII ANGLICA HISTORIA. BASILÆ, 1534

binding ceased to exist after the first-half of the sixteenth century, and we must turn to France to find it taking root and grow-

## BOOKBINDERS AND THEIR CRAFT

ing with a vitality that lasted for nearly two centuries and a half. There then it became established with the beginning of the sixteenth century under the inspiration of Italy and with the patronage of Kings and Princes and the great scholars of the time. With a guild for its protection it made the most rapid progress towards perfection and the acquisition of a native style, and it is in the magnificent series of French royal bindings that the best traditions of the art can henceforth be most appropriately studied.

SOME NOTES ON PATTERN-  
MAKING





## VIII

### SOME NOTES ON PATTERN-MAKING



THE constant production of designs for any special purpose is apt to become a matter of weariness as well as of difficulty to those unable to rest satisfied in reiteration without novelty, and the stereotyped repetition of motives on more or less mechanical lines.

No doubt the effort to avoid working in a groove belongs to the designer in any art, even the highest, but must of necessity pursue those most who are occupied with the humbler arts, since these cannot, from their restricted nature, give the artist as much scope as the more important. Still, it is not

only a higher or lower position in the hierarchy of the applied arts that determines the limitations of ornament appropriate to each. Jewelry, for example, though far removed in its scope from, let us say, architectural decoration, yet admits of almost endless diversity of shape, color, and material. So likewise do furniture, lace, and many another of the useful

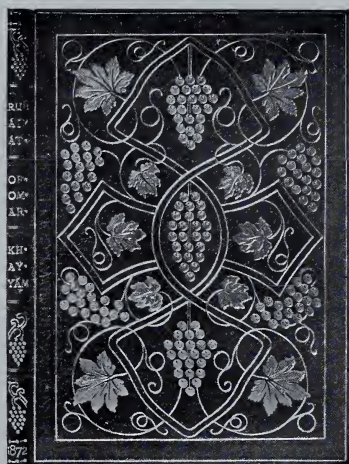


PERSIAN TILE, I

arts. But some, like bookbinding, which forms the text of these remarks, are limited in special ways which the decorator is bound to grasp at once, and with complete realisation of their unalterable character. The chronicle of the artistic side of bookbinding is at the outset full of the attempt to



RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM (DOUBLURE)



RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM, 1872



get over the limitation of material. In the early days, when books were scarce and consequently of indefinite value, the precious metals, often in combination with enamel and carved ivory, were devoted to their adornment. In those days when books were manuscripts on vellum, weight in the covers was a desirable feature rather than the reverse, and thus the affixing of metal or other plaques to the thick wooden boards was practicable and useful as well as ornamental. Even after the multiplication of books through printing, it was long before any restriction in the matter of material for covers was recognised, and it was not until the seventeenth century that the almost universal adoption of some form of leather superseded the employment of velvet, silk, embroideries, pierced metal, tortoise shell, and the like. From time to time, up to the present day, attempts have been made to revive the old custom of coverings other than leather or vellum, but the hard usage entailed by frequent handling, com-



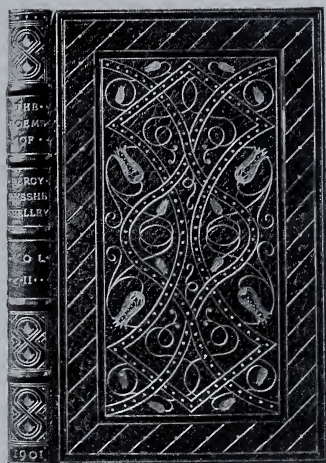
bined with the modern conditions of dirt and the usual library conventions, have shown all such efforts to be of an impractical nature.

The limitations that more especially concern us in this paper are not those of material, but the even more unalterable ones of size and shape. I say unalterable, be-

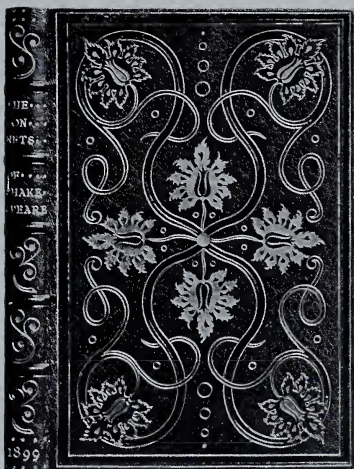


PERSIAN PLATE, 2

cause, to all intents and purposes, from the designer's point of view, they are so. Books may vary from 32mo to folio, they may be relatively narrow or wide, but they are always severely rectangular, and no attempts to ignore this fact have ever been crowned with success. Here again, as we review successive chapters in the history of binding, we see the artist's various attempts to



THE POEMS OF SHELLEY. VALE PRESS, 1901



THE SONNETS OF SHAKESPEARE. VALE PRESS, 1899



free himself from this particular limitation ; we come upon designs that treat both sides and the back as the unit, so that when the book is closed and on a table, the pattern appears only in a fragmentary state ; we see others that seem purposely to controvert, so to speak, the boundary lines, as if endeavouring to make of no avail the right angles of the carefully squared boards ; and with the latest fashion of eccentricity and affectation in things ornamental, we get what may be called the Japanese application of unconnected and generally naturalistic detail or the fireworks made out of peacocks' tails, curves and dashes—splutterings of the unrestrained fancy and the untutored hand.

I want to direct the attention of those who undertake the designing of book covers to the boundless field that lies open in the direction of Oriental art. It is nothing new ; it has always been free to the worker in every department through public museums and illustrated accounts of private col-

lections, but there seem few able or willing to learn the lessons it offers, although William Morris has shown ably enough to the present generation what a mine of wealth lies ready to him who can exploit it.

And first in importance comes that les-



PERSIAN TILE. 3

son of the East—so hard, apparently, of comprehension by the Western mind—the necessity for conventionalising natural forms. It may be said of nearly all modern English work, and of most French, that there is little left of decorative value between the extremes of arbitrary invention on the one hand and unadulterated naturalism on the other. Our schools of embroidery and

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wood-carving, our sculptured and plastered reliefs, our beaten metal and our painted pottery, all vie with each other in giving the most faithful transcript of nature. The artificiality of mind and manner that was a feature of the eighteenth century in its literature, its art, and its society, gave place to a



PERSIAN TILE. 4

reaction, as it was bound to do, and “the return to nature” is still working as a leaven in all regions of the human mind. But it is time for realisation that in the industrial arts the reproduction of naturalistic detail is not of necessity ornament. To be so, it must be transmuted by the process of intelligent selection—so clumsily called conventionalising—into what will bear application



and repetition in a given space and in a given material that has its own special characteristics.

Narcissus and snowdrops hammered on a copper coal box do not glorify it as a receptacle of coals, nor does the wall-paper covered with faithfully drawn and colored clematis give even the allusion of reality, much less the satisfaction of country visions, far more effective in the mind's eye alone. Just as it is no use to take any art out of its legitimate sphere and demand of it what it cannot give, so is it as purposeless to ask the effect of nature from flower and fruit in their application to ornament. Our French neighbours have not grasped this truth in its entirety, though they rarely represent nature with the triviality so often to be found on our common objects of every-day use. But even Marius Michel, to whose efforts it is largely due that modern French bindings have ceased to be reproductions of the old, is too apt to let his intimate acquaintance with natural floral forms suffice for the adornment of

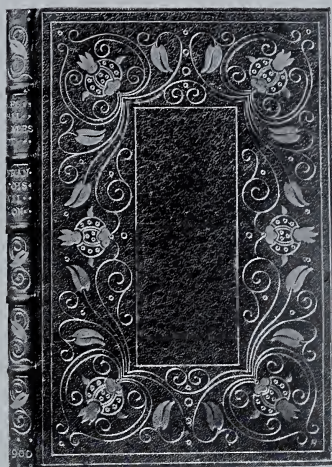
much of his fine work. This, too, is in despite of his better judgment, for his book on "The Ornamentation of Modern Bindings" contains some admirable remarks on the importance of avoiding this pitfall to those who go to the country for inspiration in design. Many of the most attractive recent French books are inlaid with that fine instinct for the harmonious blending of colours that is a national gift, but as regards the point under discussion this very colour sense more often than not presents an added snare, and we find covers of exquisite workmanship showing purple irises, climbing clematis, and the like, which are most perfect copies in colour as well as drawing of the growing plant.

Few things are more difficult than to define the precise nature of the treatment of growing things which renders them fit objects for decoration, except, perhaps, to teach how it is done. Possibly those whose instinct is least likely to err would find it most impossible of explanation. We will

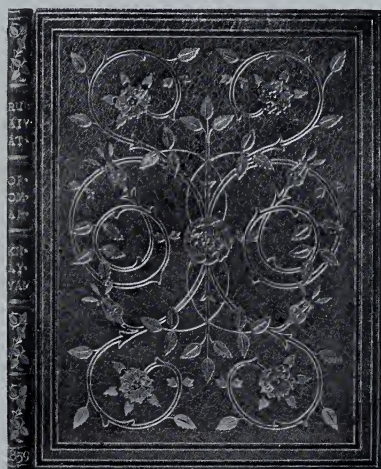
endeavour to state the most important points in connection with it, though a careful study of the art of those nations that have solved the problem most successfully will be the surest way of attaining to a realisation of the essentials. In the first place, then, the servile imitation of natural growth is to be strictly guarded against, for whilst nature never makes two leaves or blossoms alike, art, in consequence of the restriction of its tools and material, must frankly accept repetition.

Furthermore, it is preferable to choose the forms that are most salient in feature and simple in outline rather than those of which the character is shown in the multiplicity or the delicacy of their detail. The natural plant should be studied and both accentuated and simplified in translation. The rigid, unyielding lines of one may be emphasised, whilst another of climbing habit may have its convolutions insisted on in the curves of a flowing arabesque.

What can never be explained or taught



LES BALLADES DE VILLON. VALE PRESS, 1900



RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM, 1859



is just the unconscious effort by which the true decorator turns the harvest of flower and fruit that lies ready to his hand into appropriate ornament without doing violence to the natural trend of leaf or blossom—thus effecting the supreme idealisation of the type-form.

Again, there must be a certain feeling for the scale on which it is desirable to reproduce particular plant-forms. It would be inappropriate, for example, to give the effect of excessive reduction of such as are always large in their natural growth, or of undue magnitude to those like violet and snowdrop, that are lowly in their habit. By such treatment they would inevitably lose both character and significance.

Finally, it is necessary for decorative convention that there should be a certain symmetrical disposition of the material chosen when once its essentials have been grasped and its diversity of form simplified to the artist's use, for only so can the eye rest upon it with satisfaction. When one



looks at nature, there are no boundaries except those set by the limits of the field of vision, and they are not hard, but melt away so that there is no consciousness of any outline or defining framework to the picture. But it is far otherwise with most objects



PERSIAN TILE. 5

that offer scope for decoration, and especially with those of panel form. In bindings one may almost say that the limitation of the book is the first thing of which one is aware. Decoration, therefore, should be well contained within the natural boundary lines of whatever it is applied to, and should avoid both the opposite defects of being too obvious or too involved. If it is the first, it

will probably be trivial ; if the second, the mind will at once set to work upon it as on a puzzle. Æsthetic pleasure can be given by the simplest ornament or the humblest object, but *triviality* is not *simplicity*, and without the element of dignity that belongs to real simplicity the pleasure will be absent. Nor is it less important that the mind should have a sense of rest, which it can never get when the attention is absorbed with the effort to unravel a complicated or perhaps only ingeniously elaborated pattern. If the main lines are clear and uninvolved, a feeling of enjoyment is rapidly produced, and the attendant detail may be disposed in moderate intricacy without detracting from the sense of satisfied repose.

We said before that the best way of understanding this necessary process of selection and adaptation in its application to nature for purposes of art, lay in examining the ornament of those countries which have *successfully solved* the decorative problem. In my opinion no nation succeeded so admi-

rably as Persia, and it was in the attempt to turn the study of her art to account in the matter of designs for bindings that these notes originated.

Every country has achieved a triumph in the employment of some one-plant form for its ornamental uses. Egypt and Assyria appropriated the lotus and the palm; Greece the acanthus, the vine, and the honeysuckle; China the aster and the peony; Japan the almond blossom and chrysanthemum, and so on. The genius of the Persians shows itself over a wider field, but the pomegranate and vine, the iris and pink, seem to have been selected for most frequent treatment.

The importance of Persian art to the designer lies in several directions. First, in the frank and free acceptance of the natural limitations of form in the various objects decorated. In weaving carpets, the straight lines serve as inspiration for the border and the panel; in painting pottery, the curves of the ewer and the bowl are made

to contribute their value to the ornament. Nothing is more delightfully instructive than to see the same detail applied under fundamentally different conditions. As an example of this, the reader can look at the border of a tile (Figure 1) and the bottom of a plate (Figure 2) which have the same motive dexterously suited respectively to the square and the curve; and there is a like interesting treatment of a climbing plant with large leaf (Figures 3 and 6) frequently found both in the tapestry and the pottery of the country.

Secondly, the Persians ornamented articles of daily use and often of very little value, and their taste for art was so widespread that the designs were obviously made then, as they are to this day, by the artisans themselves, and not by artists in preparation for the workman. Their decoration has, therefore, that infinite variety which is only to be found under like circumstances.

Thirdly, there is the opportunity of seeing the same motive treated both natural-

istically as well as with the conventions necessary for its adaptation to more rigid schemes, and consequently of making a comparison in the same field of observation. As examples of wholly admirable convention, it is not possible to find anything to surpass the pomegranate (Figure 4) border and the rose tile (Figure 5) here given, whilst the natural rendering of iris and pink, of bud and blossom, is seen in tile after tile, illustrations of which we would fain give if space permitted.

Lastly, with all the careful study of natural growth and blossom, and an appreciation of their minutest details which one sees in the more naturalistic designs, the Persians were not afraid to let imagination, once started by some common flower or accident of growth, run riot on its own lines, so that forms only remotely resembling flowers came forth in profusion, nature merely hinting to the workman the direction in which to set his fancy free. Tile after tile, again, is thus filled with flower-forms hav-

## SOME NOTES ON PATTERN-MAKING

ing only the slightest connection with any garden plant, but excellent as ornament and distributed over a limited space with consummate skill and the most satisfactory results.

In conclusion, I would suggest that the binder of modern books, avoiding both the



PERSIAN TILE. 6

old traditional lines of historic ornament, except where such are specially appropriate, and the too naturalistic ones so much in vogue of late years, may vary his tools by seeking a new fount of inspiration in the happy achievements of Eastern decorative art.

If it is objected that this is mere plagiarism, and that what is wanted is the inven-



tion of fresh matter, I would answer that we must be honest and admit that there is little absolutely new. Moreover, it often happens, that when there is an appearance of novelty, the illusion is really due to our ignorance of what has been already done somewhere and somehow. At any rate, few can imagine themselves creative artists, and it is well to recognise that the next best thing, and the only honest and possible thing for the majority engaged in pattern-making, is a fearless research in the wide field of the art of different nations at different epochs. There may follow free annexation of such ideas and material as we find available for the scope of our own efforts if—and this is a condition of chief importance—such borrowed sources of inspiration are translated into the terms of our own temperament. In this way will the adopted motives of decoration cease to be out of place in their new environment; they will cease to appear as belonging exclusively to the country of their inception, and by force of application in a new sphere and as

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instruments of a mind conscious of its own aims, they will become what all tools and material should become, a means of giving effect to the personality of the workman.

These observations are the result of personal efforts on the lines indicated and the plates that are printed herewith are given in illustration of such attempts.



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